

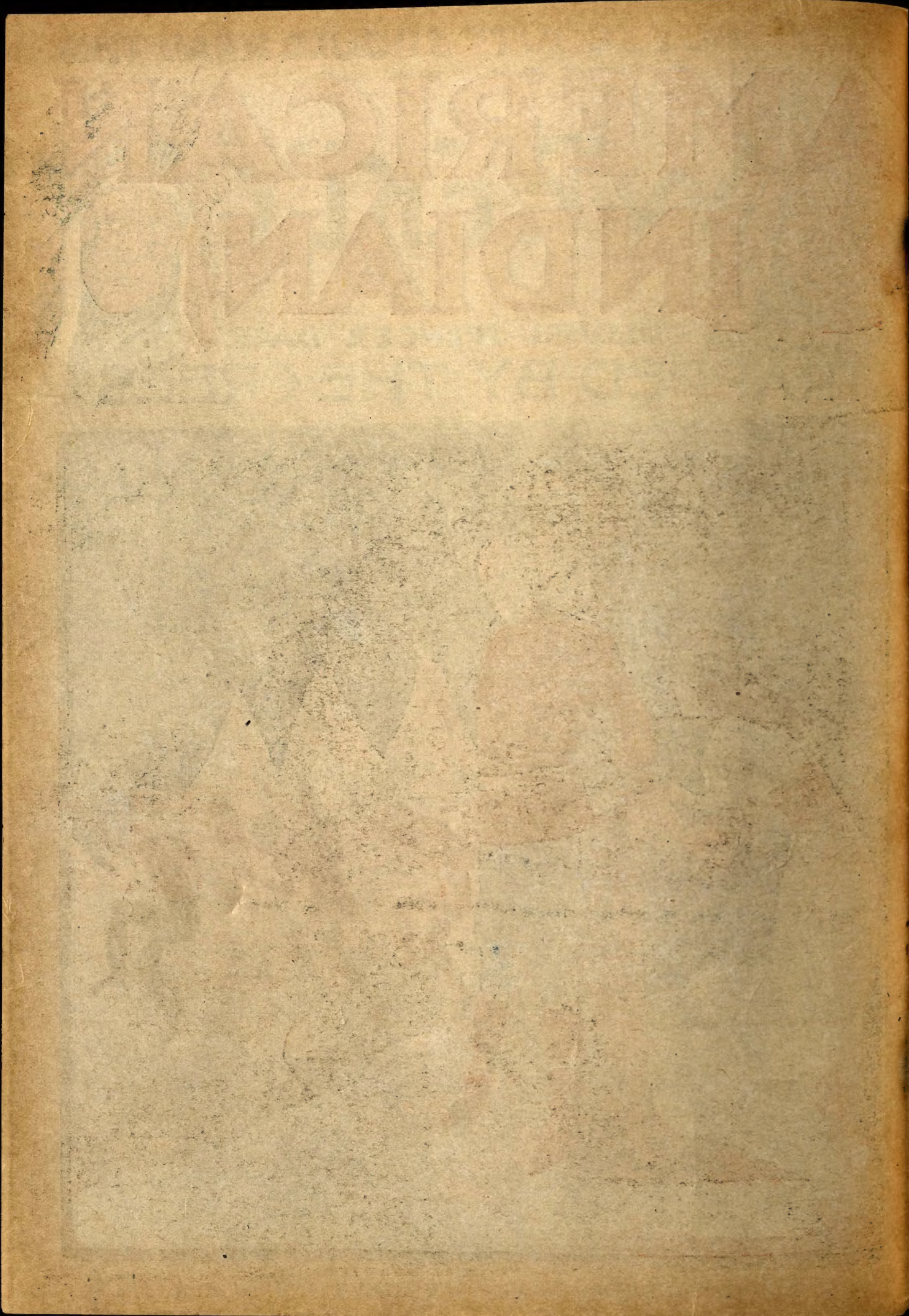
EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

TRAPPED BY THE CREES





AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

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TRAPPED BY THE CREES

OR

Tricked by a Renegade Scout

By COL. SPENCER DAIR

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

FREDERICK ELLIS—A brave Inspector of the North-West Mounted Police, whose splendid fight against a host of blood-thirsty Cree Indians is still an epic of the vast domain owned by British North America.

JULES DE CRUCES—A renegade scout, whose downfall from a place of trust to the leadership of a band of Crees, half-breeds, renegade whites, and French-Canadians is one phase of the great half-breed rebellion began by Louis Reil, against Canadian rule in the North-West.

MARION ELTING—Daughter of the superintendent of the Alaska division of the Royal North-West Mounted Police. She is a beautiful girl. Her peril from Jules de Cruces, and her rescue, after superhuman efforts, is a tale of absorbing interest.

CAROLINE BENNINGTON—She is an extremely pretty maiden who shares the lot of her friend, Marion Elting.

CLIFFORD WARING—He is better known as "Cliff," and as

second in command to Inspector Ellis, is another hero of the deadly battles with the blood-thirsty Cree Indians.

CONSTABLE CASEY—Irish, witty, a true type of the "ould sod."
CONSTABLE MANNING—Another brave man, with a way of "doing things."

CONSTABLE BUSHWICK—Just a fighter from youth.

CHIEF PIAPET—Every one in the great North-West knows him. A crafty, blood-thirsty, devilish Sioux Indian, leader of the great nation which always contests the white-man's assumed right to rule the North.

GREAT BEAR—A Cree Indian, like his fellows, crafty, subtle, and cruel.

FORDJWAY—Medicine Man to the Cree Indian Nation. A trouble maker by inciting his people to frenzied attacks on the whites.

SIR FREDERICK ELTING—Uncle of Marion Elting. Commander of the Royal North-West Mounted Police at Fort Edmonton, British North America.

CHAPTER I.

AT BAY IN THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

"Shoot lower next time!"

Handsome Frederick Ellis, Inspector in the Royal North-West Mounted Police roared these words across the battle field.

Flash, Bang!

The long lean brown tube carried by Constable Clifford Waring settled at rest in his sinewy brown hand, and its death giving bullet sped to its mark. In the edge of a long line of high timber away over to the right a young warrior of the Cree nation of Indians

leaped in the air, and crumpled over dead with a bullet in his brain.

Inspector Ellis with his eyes ablaze with the deadly light of battle, flamed over the field like a man crazed with the lust for carnage. His was a fearful plight. Hemmed in by a band of more than 100 blood-thirsty Cree Indians, he, his second in command, Constable Waring, with three other men of the Royal North-West Mounted Police had made a running fight for three hours.

In the heart of British North America, a country whose lower lateral boundry is 1,800 miles long; whose Northern limit is the Arctic circle two thousand

miles away, a little handful of white men in a very ocean of land, silent, limitless, awe inspiring, he well knew that there was little hope of help from men of his race. His heart was cold within him, but his blood leaped with happiness as he fought on.

"Rush forward as they fire," Ellis yelled. "Make for the shores of Athabasca Lake. We may then escape down the Athabasca River. It's only a half mile away."

Constable Waring nodded in grim intensity.

"Stoop low after each shot," he cried. "Then when you fire rush for fifty feet, and drop again."

"That's the way," rejoined Inspector Ellis. "I will lead you, Waring, and Constables Casey, Manning and Bushwick, come after in the order named. Put the two girls in the center of a sort of flying wedge. One of you mind the provisions."

With military promptness the little party of beleaguered men followed the command of their leader.

Marion Elting, her face white and drawn, but brave as a lioness rose from her shelter beneath a clump of brush, as she heard Inspector Ellis speak. Her tall form, rounded and beautiful was a fair mark for the bullets of the terrible band of Indians that hemmed her in on all sides, and who were thirsting for her capture, and the blood of her gallant defenders. But she cared not for herself, and calling to her friend and companion Caroline Bennington, who bravely followed her, ran to the center of a tiny V shaped double line which the anxious men formed about them.

"All down to the earth," came the sharp command from Ellis as he saw the V shaped formation had been made.

Every person in the little company sank to the ground. Over them sped bullet after bullet. The air was heavy with the humming whine of rifle's deadly baggage. Long fringes of flame leaped from the timber land through which they were making this fearful way.

It was fortunate that this was so. Had they been unsheltered by forest thick with underbrush, they would have been riddled by a hundred weapons in a moment.

"Now boys all ready," whispered Ellis. "When I count one, two, three, every one of us must pick out an Indian target. At the word three, rise, fire, and rush till you see me drop. You then drop also, but keep the girls safe in the rushes. We may die but save their lives, we must."

"Wait one moment," whispered Marion Elting.

"Remember that the last man to die must first kill me and my companion."

Ellis nodded.

"Of course," he replied simply, "death is better than to fall alive into the hands of the Cree Indians for any woman."

The little party of sorely beset white men took three minutes for breath.

"All ready?" queried Ellis as he glanced over the little cavalcade.

"Yes," came the reply in stern whispers.

"One," counted Ellis.

Every man crept to a half stooping position.

"Two."

The click of rifle hammers coming to full cock swept down the line.

"Three!" whispered Ellis. "Fire!"

Every man leaped to his feet. In a roll of detona-

tion came the shots from their weapons. Each man had aimed well. There was seen the whirling of dusky forms where the Indians were scattered in a circle about the fighting band. Horrid yells of pain rent the air.

With the speed of the wind the white men dashed forward an hundred, two hundred feet, and as the yellowish Khaki clad form of Ellis sank to earth, every man in the party disappeared as if lost in a deep cavern.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ellis. "Well done! We got a good lead that time. Are the girls all safe?"

"All safe," came the clear voice of Marion Elting. "We are ready for the next rush."

"I got a Chief that time," laughed Clifford Waring, better known in the North-West Mounted Police as "Cliff" Waring. There was no braver man than he in all that brave little army of devoted men.

"How do you know?" smiled Ellis.

In answer came the terrible war cry of the great Cree nation of Indians. It rose and fell in fiendish notes that made the blood of Miss Elting and Miss Bennington run cold in their veins.

Then the cries swung into the death song of the tribe.

"Yes, you got a Chief," whispered Ellis as he heard the death song.

"We will get a breathing spell now," replied Waring. "That will cease their firing for a time until they see where they can lay their Chief safe from possible scalping knives of an enemy. We don't scalp to be sure, but they don't know whether we would or not."

Waring spoke truly. The hot fire which had been directed at them suddenly ceased. The watchers could see dusky forms, however, stealing from great tree, to great tree, all around them, or seeking cover in the thick underbrush.

Waring crawled toward Ellis.

"We are in a pretty tight place," he said.

"Very," rejoined Ellis.

"Have you any plan?"

"Just one."

"What is it?"

"Try and get to the block-house on the shores of Athabasca Lake. It was built by our men a few years ago as an Isle of Safety for one beset as we are. If we can get there we can resist some time."

"Can we do it?" asked Waring.

"I don't know. If the Indians rush us we are gone. But the stealthy brutes are afraid to come out in the open. That is our only hope of escape."

"What of the girls?"

"That is the hardest thing to bear. We of the Mounted Police expect to die any time. But they won't be killed. I would hate to go into the Eternal thinking that Marion Elting and Caroline Bennington were the unwilling brides of such blood-thirsty scoundrels as are in that band of murdering Crees."

"They won't have to suffer that," replied Waring his face set and stern. "If I am the last man left, and see that I must go, I'll shoot both girls dead. It's the kindest act I can do for them."

Ellis put out his hand. Waring grasped it. The two men gripped each other in silent comradeship.

"If I am the last man alive I will do the same for both girls," said Ellis simply.

"It's a hard game we are up against any way," continued Waring after a moment's silence. "Had I

known Chief Piapet and the Wood Crees were up and on the war-path I would never have tried to act as one of your escorts to take the girls to Fort Edmonton."

"What could we do?" rejoined Ellis. "We had our orders from Major Perry. He is Commissioner of our forces, and he told the Superintendent of our district that you, I, and three constables were to act as escort to Miss Elting, and Miss Bennington, until we got them safe at Fort Edmonton."

"Of course, orders are orders," answered Waring. "I don't suppose the Commissioner knew the Crees were up. But who is Miss Elting?"

"She is the daughter of the Superintendent of the Alaska post. She is living with her relatives, Sir, Frederick Elting's wife and daughter at Fort Edmonton. A year ago she went to Alaska to visit her father. She took Miss Bennington with her. When they were ready to return she was sent under escort from post to post. Then when she reached our post we were detailed to take her to the fort."

"What a terrible journey," replied Waring. "Thousands of miles along weary roads, trails, through almost trackless forests, through terrible snows, through rain, wind, and stress. It's an awful journey to the Alaskan post. I know for I have been there."

"But she is a brave girl, is Miss Elting, and more power to the black eyes of Miss Bennington for she is equally brave," rejoined Waring. "Those two girls are worth fighting for. But ye God's, at what odds! Do you know how many men Chief Piapet has?"

"From the line of fire I should say about 100; maybe more?"

"They fought pretty well."

"I never knew a Cree that could shoot straight enough to hit anything at 100 yards. If it had been a Sioux from over Montana way, we would have been scalped long before this. Think of the powder and shot wasted on us, and we aren't even scratched."

"It's not their poor shooting that we can thank. They aren't trying to hit us. Some likely young scoundrel of a Cree brave needs a white wife or two in his tepee. They want to make us the central peg in a sweet little fire they will kindle about us. I object to burning at the stake, but if we get off that easy in case they capture us, we are lucky."

"I wouldn't mind one kind of a stake, at that," replied Ellis.

"What kind?"

"Beef steak."

Even in the awful danger of the moment the two men smiled.

"Speaking of provender," went on Ellis, "how are we off?"

"You know when we were first attacked on the Fort Edmonton trail a mile back our horses were shot under us at the first fire?"

"Do I know? Wasn't I there? There I was riding along fine and easy like. Bing! goes off a gun somewhere out of the forest. My horse jumps right over the sun. When he comes down I land in a pile of dirt. I eat about four pints. I get up. All the other horses are down, deader than smelts. There stands you with those two big 45 caliber Colts working like the piston of a steam engine. Around you are the rest of the boys all shooting at about seventy million big Cree Indians who are making the woods look and sound like an American Fourth-of-July."

"Well we beat them off, didn't we? And you

seemed to be pretty busy at that crouching behind your dead horse firing like some infernal locoed man?"

"I was that mad that I had to do something or burst."

"Who got the provisions?"

"Your modest friend and subordinate got the precious little there is dear old pal, and faithful commander of this party of near dead ones," replied Waring with a sarcastic inflection. "The pack mule lay near me when I got the dirt out of my mouth and eyes. His legs were sticking straight up in the air like some four-poster bed. I crawled to him, rolled him over, and got——"

"One hundred pounds of flour."

"Yes and some assorted salt."

"What's assorted salt?"

"The kind that runs. The un-assorted kind always sticks to the salt shaker."

"Anyway," answered Ellis with a laugh, "we have some food."

"One hundred pounds of flour will make some flap-jacks," replied Waring.

"But it won't last long for five men and two women. I could eat the whole hundred pounds raw."

"But it will keep starvation away at any rate," rejoined Ellis.

"Got any tobacco?"

Ellis laid his rifle across his knees and took a big plug of chewing tobacco from his hip pocket. From his belt he drew his long Bowie knife, with its double razor edged blade.

Just as he began cutting a generous slice of tobacco to hand to Waring he saw the bushes directly opposite him tremble and then part.

Down into his eyes looked the fierce face of a gigantic Cree Indian.

A scout of the Indians had penetrated to the hiding place of the white men.

The Indian was painted for war. Deep red strips of paint ran across his face in bands. His war-bonnet with its fringe of gray eagle's feathers showed that he was a great Chief. He was naked to the waist, his body being striped like a tiger in black, and yellow bands. His stalwart legs bore deer-skin tight fitting leggings, which were also fringed in eagle's feathers. On his feet were gaily decorated moccasins, decorated with beads.

Through his black hair decorated with a great eagle's wing, his black eyes darted and roved. A tomahawk was grasped in one hand. A long rifle was clutched in his other hand.

Had it not been for this, Ellis knew that his days had been numbered. The Indian Chief had not expected that he was so near his quarry, and was not ready to shoot on the moment, as he would have been had he known that in the Buffalo wallow, beneath a heavy screen of bushes and second growth timber, lay the party he was searching for.

Ellis was equally in peril. When he started to cut a bit of tobacco for Waring he had placed his rifle upon his knees. His revolvers were swinging at both hips, and he was seated. A motion toward rifle or revolvers would be met with a similar motion by the Indian chief.

It was an even chance that both white man and Indian would each die when the double shots rang out.

It was a perilous situation.

A thought whirled through Ellis's brain.

His hand bearing the Bowie knife rose to the height of his head with the speed of the wind.

Before the Indian chief could drop his tomahawk, and get his rifle to shooting poise, across the few feet that separated the Indian from Ellis, came the glancing light of the Bowie knife.

The steel hissed through the air.

Its sharp point struck fair on the broad painted chest of the savage.

The Bowie knife sank deep into the Indian's heart. With a low gurgling gasp he sank to the ground dead, while his blood ran fast and made a great pool around him.

Ellis had made a splendid shot. He had hurled the Bowie knife in true North-Western fashion, deep into the beating life of his enemy.

Not stopping to discover the identity of the Chief he had just killed Ellis sprang to his feet. He well knew that the death of the Indian if rightly met would aid his party.

"All rush for the block-house save me," he whispered. "Warning you take command of the squad."

Warning obeyed.

As he led the little party through the underbrush, with true woodsman craft taking advantage of every tree, every shrub, the deep grass, or bits of isolated shelter, to keep some protection between the party and the enemy which was now massed at his right, Ellis crawled to the top of the deep indentation or Buffalo wallow, and drawing his big Colt revolvers, began a ruse that he hoped would be successful.

Ellis fired first with his revolver. The shot went hurtling toward the enemy but did not do much damage.

But the moment it was fired Ellis had rushed fifteen feet to the right and this time fired his rifle. So quick was his motion that he practically had fired the revolver and the rifle together, but his change of position had made the enemy think that the little party was still in the Buffalo wallow, and not that all were on the way to the shelter of the block-house except one man.

For an hour Ellis kept up these tactics. He drew the fire of the Indians quite as usual. They were suspecting nothing, he felt sure.

"I'm burning up an awful lot of ammunition," whispered Ellis to himself, "but this is the only way to give Warning time to get the party in the block-house."

It was like the brave Inspector to not even think of himself. Here he was, alone, hemmed in by Indians, thinking only of the escape of his party, the little band he was assigned to protect, and not wondering how he could break out of the ring of painted red devils that surrounded him when the savages learned that he was alone and that they were facing one desperate man alone in their power.

Still, Ellis fought on.

He would wait until the Indians had shot a volley, and then would reply quickly from all points of a tiny circle, keeping up the illusion that his command was still with him, shooting at the enemy.

So the fight waged.

At times there would be long silences. Then the Indians would shoot like mad-men, meanwhile yelling their terrible war cry.

In these moments Ellis saw that it was clearly the intention of the Indians to not kill him. There was

no effort to shoot into his shelter. Most of the shots were wide and high.

"They are going to try and capture us," Ellis thought. "Well we will give them a merry time doing it."

Ellis rapidly fired, and then settling back, high above the din of the battle, sang his song; the great epic of the lives of the North-West Mounted Police:

"We drown in unknown waters,
We burn in forest flame.
We freeze on the Northern barriers;
Some meet a self-sought shame.
Fever, frost and hunger,
Thirst 'neath a cloudless sky;
Bullet, spear and knife thrust—
Thus do your wastrels die.
What should they know of our troubles,
Our hopes, or fears or care,
Who sit in the ingle corner,
Where the glowing embers flare?
Truly they dream of Empire,
In their listless Island way,
But little they reckon the Empire's cost
Their vagrant sons must pay."

Loud and high roared the song. The Indians heard it. Their shots ceased and in the vast silence amid a wondering band of blood-thirsty savages Ellis sang his song, which he deep in his heart feared was his death song.

When he had finished in long, wierd shrieks, came the answer in the battle cry of the Crees.

"La! La! La! La! La-La-oo-ee," came the yells from the deep base of some painted warrior to the shrill treble of the young boy on his first war trail. The effect was startling. White man, lordly, alone, dominant, roaring his epic of his band of brave men. Indians replying in the savage phonetics of their war-cry.

And a little band of hurrying whites, of which two were women trusting to the singer to keep at bay, the howling savage mob, were stealthily plunging through the underbrush for the Isle of Safety, the block-house.

The sun suddenly sank beneath the great fringe of the forest, and twilight settled upon the lonely fighter, and his surrounding band of savages.

The scant twilight in the great North-West soon was followed by darkness. Ellis had for some time contented himself with a shot or two every half hour. The Indians had apparently felt that there was no chance of escape on the part of the white band, and had replied by isolated shots, just enough apart to give the impression that there was a cordon of watchers busy, and that escape had not better be attempted.

"It's all very well," remarked Ellis to a vagrant bird that had perched itself on a twig above his head, "but I am not going to be cooped in here much longer like a hen that wants to set and mustn't. I'm going to make a break for that block-house. The party must be safely there hours ago."

Calculating the chances in his mind, Ellis decided that as soon as it was dark he would steal under cover of the night toward the block-house. Whether he could reach it was a question he knew. But he decided that sooner or later he would be captured if he remained in the Buffalo wallow, and even if he was detected in his attempt to escape, that a shot might end all his troubles.

If he was fortunate enough to run the gauntlet of the surrounding Indians and reach the block-house there was some chance that the party might fight

their way out from the block-house, or they could all die together within it.

"I'll be killed probably if I go. I'll be starved out if I stay," remarked Ellis. "Well, I'll start, and die fighting like a man anyway."

When darkness came dense in the North-West by ten o'clock, Ellis took a long pull at the water canteen at his belt. Then he ate an army biscuit which he always carried in his pocket in the inside of his jacket. He took his cartridge belt from his shoulder and counted his ammunition. He saw that he had 250 rounds of rifle cartridges left, and around his waist was another belt holding 300 revolver cartridges.

"Plenty of ammunition anyway," he thought. "If the men in the block-house are as well off they have nothing to fear with 100 pounds of flour" then he laughed to himself, and Waring's "assorted salt."

Giving a parting series of shots, knowing that the Crees would think this was his usual half hourly attack and that they would reply in kind and settle back until the half hour was over, to resume the aimless firing, in their policy to starve him into submission, Ellis started on his terrible perilous attempt to escape.

"I've got a half hour before they find out I'm gone from the Buffalo wallow" Ellis thought.

With his rifle swung upon his back by its strap, Ellis trusted to his Army and Navy 45 Colt as the weapon for quick action.

He began creeping slowly through the long grass, and the heavy underbrush.

He heard the sound of heavy firing at a distance. He stopped to listen.

"They have gained the block-house," he thought. A gleam of happiness crossed his face. "At last that much has been gained by my ruse. They are safe in a place where they can stand quite a siege. Now it's up to me to regain them, and try to fight off this devilish band some how—God alone knows how."

It was a triumph of wood-craft to watch Ellis at work in his effort to escape. It seemed as if in the dense darkness he had the way of progressing without noise, and almost without stirring the branches of a single tree or swaying the slender twigs from the smallest shrub.

He worked his way along swiftly yet silently.

Nearer and nearer he crept to the denser forest where the enemy was lurking. He expected any moment to run into one of their out-posts. But he fortunately did not.

Creeping at length among the larger trees, he rounded one great giant of the forest, and came suddenly upon a little cluster of tepees. He hid behind the trunk of the tree and watched.

There were six tepees in the little settlement, he saw. Each had a key pole in its center, around which was stretched deer and antelope dressed skins, which were fastened to pegs, making quite a good imitation of the British Army service tent.

In the immediate foreground was a brightly burning fire of brush. By the light of the blaze Ellis could see that several Indian women were trying to keep warm about the flame, for the early fall nights in British North America are keen in temperature.

"Women with a war party?" whispered Ellis. "I can not understand that. What does this mean? No Cree Indian War Party ever allowed itself before, to

take along several women. There's a reason for this action. Now what is it? What is behind this?"

As if in direct answer to his words a small, yet strong hand grasped Ellis by his right arm, in which he held the pistol ready for use.

Ellis grasped the person by the neck. His left hand slid to his knife sheath. Then he remembered it was empty. The knife it usually carried was buried in the heart of the dead Chief back at the Buffalo wallow.

Ellis dared not fire his revolver at his enemy. To do that, his brain told him, would bring down the Indians from the nearby tepees in dozens. His capture would be certain.

So he fought to use his great strength upon the throat of his enemy. But as he slipped his hand upon the neck of the Indian he felt that the throat was round and warm, and soft.

"A young boy," thought Ellis, as he twisted about to get a stronger hold. He was met with no resistance. The hand still clung to his revolver arm. Otherwise the form within his grasp was passive.

"Do not shoot," Ellis heard a voice. It was the clear low tone of a woman speaking in English. "Unhand me, and follow me quickly."

In intense surprise but in utter silence, Ellis did as he was bid.

His guide led him to the darkest point in the woods, to the left of where he was trying to break through the line of Indians.

Ellis saw that he was being led by a young Indian girl of possible twenty years of age. He saw that she was pretty, even in the darkness, as she flitted along like a swallow ahead of him. When the pale light of the now rising moon touched his companion's face, Ellis saw that she was of the beautiful brunette type of girl, that is due to either white father or mother, or Indian paternal or maternal ancestors.

Beneath a splendid tree the woman halted.

"You are Inspector Ellis, of the North-West Mounted Police, are you not?" she asked.

"Yes."

"They told me so at the tepee."

"Who is the head of the band of Crees?" asked Ellis in return.

"Chief Piapet."

"What, that blood-thirsty old ruffian?"

"Yes—but he is my father."

"What?"

"It is true. My mother was his captive after a raid. She was a white woman, whom he forced to become his bride."

"Is your mother dead?"

"Thank God, yes."

"Did she teach you to speak this good English?"

"Yes."

"Did not the Chief, your father, object?"

"No. They use me as interpreter for the tribe."

"Is your father on the war-path against the whites?"

"He is."

"Why?"

"He was incited to rise."

"By whom?"

"By my husband."

"Who is he?"

"Jules de Cruces."

Ellis turned white underneath his tan. He gave back a step.

"Good God," he said, "do you mean that Jules de Cruces, the *renegade scout* is behind this awful attack on us?"

"I do."

"The Renegade Scout, the terror of the great North-West," gasped Ellis.

"And you his wife, are leading me to safety. What does all this mean?"

"Listen," replied the Indian girl. "I will tell you all."

"But my party?" questioned Ellis.

"They are safe in the block-house. A War Party has been sent to capture them."

"Thank God! at least that they are still free," said Ellis. "Now tell me your reason for aiding me."

"Listen," again said the Indian girl.

CHAPTER II.

AN INDIAN WIFE'S BETRAYAL.

"My husband, as you call him the *renegade scout*, is the real leader of this band of Crees."

It was thus the Indian girl began her story to Ellis.

"Well," replied the Inspector.

"You know the early history of my husband, do you not?"

"I do," replied Ellis. "He was once our best friend. We Mounted Police trusted him greatly. He was in our employ for years as a paid scout. But he suddenly left us and became leader of the Crees and began a life of slaughter of every white man that he could."

"Do you know why?"

"No."

"He is a half-breed like myself. His father was a Spaniard, a hunter and trapper. His mother was Laughing Water, the prettiest maiden of her day in the Cree nation."

"He has no reason for killing innocent settlers, in the sparsely settled places in this great land," continued Ellis. "If you could see the men, women and little children lying dead in their frontier homes as I have after his party of Indians and desperadoes had attacked them so many times, you would have no sympathy with him."

"I have no sympathy with him, but he is not in his right mind."

"Why do you say that?"

"Do you remember Louis Reil?"

"You mean the leader of the great half-breed rebellion, who like a flaming sword devastated all British territory about us, killing and wounding, maiming and destroying every living thing in his path except that held sacred by its having protection from half-breeds, or Indians?"

"I do."

"Why, it took the best endeavor of the entire Canadian government at Ottawa to quell that Rebellion. It was the most tremendous thing that ever happened on our territory," replied Ellis.

"It was," rejoined the Indian girl. "And Louis Reil, the half-breed after the Canadian government put down the Rebellion was hanged at Regina."

"You are right."

"An hour before he died he said '*within three days my soul will again enter my body. I will then come to life again. I will again head this great rebellion.*'"

"So we understand it in the official archives of our Mounted Police."

"Every Indian, and half-breed knows what Louis Reil said just before he was executed," added the girl. Ellis nodded.

"It has been made part of the folklore of every Indian," went on the girl. "My husband, the *renegade scout*, knew this fact, and he has made Chief Piaget think that he is *Louis Reil come back to life.*"

"My God!" gasped Ellis.

He knew as the girl spoke what all this meant. Not a common uprising of a few Indians was it now, but a stealthy, well organized attack, led by a man who had brains; who had excited the fanatical superstition of the great Cree Indian tribe. Here was a new Rebellion, stalking over the vast country. It would need millions of men, and a tremendous outlay of money if it was not quelled at once. The fire-brand was lighted. The *renegade scout* not only had the Indians with him, but that vast army of dissolute men, desperadoes, bad men not safe even in border towns from arrest, whisky smugglers, the abandoned of every climate in the world, of every race. A cold perspiration broke out on Ellis's face. He tore his wide felt sombrero from his head and wiped his fevered brow.

"Do you know how far the Crees have risen?" he asked.

"We have riders here who have come in from time to time and reported that all the Crees along the Saskatchewan River are up. They have killed every living person of the white race in that part of the country."

"Then the Crees are up from Assiniboia pretty near to Alberta—a trackless wilderness of foemen," replied Ellis sadly.

"Yes."

For a long time he stood deep in thought. Then he reached a conclusion.

"We drown in unknown waters, we burn in forest flame," he quoted. "Well my little gallant band of five men will give a good account of itself in all this welter of crime and carnage."

Then turning to the Indian girl, Ellis began a series of questions.

"Granted that all you have told me is true, why are you helping me?"

"From love."

Ellis stared.

"Not for love of you, you fool," the girl continued, "but for love of my husband."

"I do not understand."

"He threatens to capture your band. He says he will give all the men over to the Indians for torture and death, but the women are to be his property."

"My God."

"He adds that he will make Miss Elting, whom he saw when she was at your post to join her father in Alaska, two years ago, his wife."

"Yes."

"I am then to become only his second wife. She will be the Chief Wife."

"I understand."

"Miss Bennington is to be held for ransom. She has wealthy relatives."

"I see."

"That is why I am here with you tonight, in secret, removed from the fear of discovery in this place of darkness as we are."

"What do you mean?"

"If I aid you to escape in some way, my husband's

plans can not bear fruit. If you take Marion Elting away, he can not get her in his clutches, to marry her. Nor can he ask ransom for Caroline Bennington. Then he will not be able to replace me with a second wife, who according to Indian marriage laws would be my superior, I her servant."

Ellis nodded. His mind saw through the reason for his safety just now from savage pursuit, even before the girl had spoken. He could turn her plans to aid him in a possible escape.

"I will not thank you," he said. "You are not doing this to aid me as much as you are to aid yourself."

"Precisely."

"How did you find that I was hiding beneath that tree near the tepees?"

"I knew your reputation for being a brave man, and knew that sooner or later you would try to escape from the Buffalo wallow, where the Crees said you were hidden."

"They intended to starve us out, did they not?"

"Yes, they told me so. They said that they could have killed your entire party any time. The Indians wanted to do it, but the *renegade scout* refused to let them. He said he might kill the girls, and he had not attacked your band and risked getting into trouble with the Canadian government at Ottawa which backs your Mounted Police up to the limit, unless there was some reward awaiting him."

"Well?"

"I kept out a sharp eye for you after I had heard what my husband said. I saw you steal up to the tree by the tepees, and then I crept out to you and told you what I have told you."

"Are you not afraid you will be followed?"

"No. No one would dare to follow me. One youth did once; none ever since."

"Why?"

"Because I killed him with a knife I always carry."

"My—but I'd not care to be married to you," remarked Ellis.

The Indian girl paid no attention to his words.

"We are safe from spying eyes here in this semi-darkness amid these great trees," she continued. "But there is no more to tell you now. There at your right, only ten paces away leads a trail direct to the block-house where are your friends. Follow it! Be careful as you pass the picket line of warriors about the block-house. They will not be watching keenly. They have not detected your ruse at the Buffalo wallow, and think you there yet. They feel secure of the people in the block-house. My husband says they 'are bottled up' and none of you can escape. Now go your way."

"Shall I ever see you again?"

"Do you know the call of the great lion of the Rocky mountains?"

"Yes."

"Listen."

From the girl's lips came softly the wail, like that of a sobbing child, which Ellis so well knew as the night call of the fierce Rocky Mountain lion.

"I know," he said.

"When you hear that cry thrice, then twice more, you will know that I am calling. Follow that cry when so expressed. It may be the fruits of another meeting will be the salvation of yourself and your friends."

"I promise."

"Good night."

"One thing more," hastily put in Ellis. "What is your name?"

"You would not know it in the Cree language, but in English I am called, 'The Dawn.'"

With these words the girl disappeared in the darkness of the woods.

Without a moment's delay Ellis found the trail to the block-house, and hurriedly pressed onward.

Hardly had he taken a step when he staggered back. Across his path came a shape.

He drew his revolver. Was it a savage Indian? No. He must not shoot. It would only call about him the hordes of Indians that lurked on every hand. Alas! Again he remembered that he had no knife.

Ellis sunk into the shadows of the woods. The stealthy shape followed him slowly. Its eyes seemed balls of flame. Its low cry, like the sobbing of a child came to his ear.

"It's a Rocky Mountain lion, lured here by the cry of the Indian girl," said Ellis half aloud. "It scents me and not seeing its mate thinks that I am to blame. Except the grizzly bear, robbed of its whelp, there is no more dreadful beast in these latitudes. Shall I shoot, or not?"

The terrible lion, lashing its sides with its tail, its eyes like glowing coals of fire began circling about Ellis. He turned on his heel with his rifle ready cocked, but hesitating whether to shoot or not. He could kill the venomous cat at once but if he did he would bring a host of red devils about him, as the shot echoed through the forest.

The great lion crouched ready to spring upon the gallant Inspector.

CHAPTER III.

THE RENEGADE SCOUT.

"Stand fast to your loop-holes."

Constable "Cliff" Waring thus commanded his men, while his superior officer was struggling with death after keeping his lone vigil.

The little party had reached the block-house unmolested. Inspector Ellis had by his ruse saved the lives of all, and Marion Elting, and Caroline Bennington breathed a prayer for his safety, when they stumbled across the block-house entrance door, and heard the clang of the iron bound oak door as it swung shut behind them making a splendid barrier against all of their red enemies.

The party found themselves in a sort of cellar. This was made by the four walls of heavy timbers rough hewn from the great forest. In this cellar stood a ladder, which was the only way to get to the upper floor, the entire building being two stories in height. The ladder reached through an open trap-door. All that had to be done was to mount the ladder, let fall the trap-door and the party would be in a fort-like room pierced at regular intervals so that defenders could shoot out upon any attacking party.

Constable Waring quickly saw these points. One thing appealed to him. He saw that a deep ditch into which a tiny brook had been diverted surrounded the block-house. There were several feet of water thus, about the structure.

"They would have to drain that before they could set fire to the block-house," said Waring to one of his companions.

The thickness of the wood that made up the block-

house timbers seemed to Waring's careful eyes, to preclude the possibility of any bullet penetrating.

"Unless they shoot through the loop-holes we are pretty safe to be able to hold this place for some time," he thought. "Water is the only shortage to fear."

Ascending to the upper floor, he assisted Miss Elting and Miss Bennington to ascend the ladder. The other Constables, Casey, Manning, and Bushwick followed.

The party found the room to be square in shape. At one side stood a sheet iron stove. It would burn wood, Waring saw, so he put Constable Casey at work bringing in short bits of timber that would fit in the stove.

"Constable Manning," said Waring, "you see that big barrel is filled with water from the ditch around us. It's brackish, but we must take what we can get."

Constable Bushwick was posted at a loop-hole to watch out for any possible enemy.

"We can't afford to lose a man, and a wounded man is as bad, worse, than a dead one," remarked Waring to Bushwick. "It will be probably an hour, possibly longer, before the Indians discover that Ellis has outwitted them. Meantime we must prepare for the onslaught which will surely come, as well as we can."

The next hour was a busy one. A frugal supper consisting of flap-jacks made from the flour was quickly prepared by the girls.

"Short rations, ladies," commanded Waring. "Half a loaf is better than no bread at all."

Under his instructions the least possible expenditure of flour with the greatest possible results was accomplished, but after the meal every one was about as hungry as when he or she began.

"If you will give me authority," ventured Constable Manning at this point, "I can get an antelope I think, for our breakfast tomorrow."

"How?"

"I found this bit of rope in the block-house," replied Manning. "I am a bit of a lasso thrower, you know, for I come from lower Texas where they brand cattle by lassoing them. I guess if you let me, I will try and see what I can do."

"Take as little risk as you can," replied Waring. "You are at liberty to proceed."

Manning started out from the block-house door while Constable Casey stood at a loop-hole to give warning of the approach of the Indians. The two young women, and the remainder of the party clustered about the various loop-holes and watched Manning.

They saw him disappear up in the lower limbs of a great tree just at the edge of the woods which were about 250 feet from the block-house. The block-house was in the center of a cleared space about 250 feet square.

Then silence settled on the scene.

Manning seemed to have been blotted out of life. Not a single trace of him could be seen.

The anxious watchers for a space of twenty minutes stood spell bound watching the scene.

Into the open at last stole many of the lesser animals of the woods. Rabbits in hundreds jumped hither and thither. A Rocky Mountain lion stole into view, caught the scent from the block-house and vanished in a whirl of fear and wrath.

At length with a flash of tan colored hide, its head

erect, dashed from the great forest a magnificent buck antelope.

It stood directly beneath the tree in which Constable Manning was hidden.

"Why don't he take action," fumed Waring in the block-house. "That splendid antelope will get away."

No sooner had he spoken than from out of the tree shot the long winding lasso. The antelope gave one leap toward the forest and safety. But about his antlers whipped the lasso, thrown by the dexterous hand of Manning.

With a splendid flash for life the antelope dashed the full length of the rope but it was securely fastened to the tree. The rush only threw the animal upon its back.

Before it could rise Constable Manning had plunged his Bowie knife into the animal's heart, and hardly was its eyes glazed by death, than Manning hoisted the creature over his shoulder, and started back for the block-house.

This very action saved his life.

As the antelope settled upon his shoulders, with its head hanging down his back two rifle shots rent the air. Manning felt the impact as two bullets struck the antelope on his back.

But he pluckily staggered along beneath his burden.

From out of the woods two Indians dressed in war attire ran after Manning, forgetting the people in the block-house or feeling sure that they would not dare to shoot at them for fear of killing Manning.

"By thunder," yelled Constable Waring "they'll get Manning sure."

He grasped his long rifle. In a moment through the port-hole, or rather loop-hole in the block-house appeared the barrel of Waring's weapon.

It seemed as if he took no aim, so instantaneous was the presentation of the muzzle of the rifle with the report that followed its discharge.

Taking one great leap in the air the head savage now only a few feet from Manning stopped short, and keeled over on his side, shot through the heart and dead before he struck the ground.

His companion fled to the woods as if Old Nick was after him.

"There's one good Indian," remarked Waring with a smile to Miss Elting.

"On the theory that a dead Indian is always a good Indian," she rejoined.

"There's a lot of bad Indians out there that will have to be made good," remarked Miss Bennington.

"I will rush down and let in Constable Manning," put in Constable Casey, suiting the action to the words.

The entire party save Constable Bushwick, who remained at watch upon the enemy hurried down the ladder to the lower floor.

There they found Manning skinning the antelope, quite oblivious to the fact that his deed was a gallant one, and that with the flour, he had made it now possible to resist quite a siege.

"This antelope skin is just what I want," he remarked quite bewildered by the chorus of praises showered upon him. "I need thongs for my saddle."

"What men!" thought Marion Elting. "His horse is dead miles away. He is one of a band of whites shut up in a block-house by a deadly band of savages yet he plans for the time when he will be free, will have another horse and will need some thongs for his saddle."

While Miss Elting did not know it then, she afterward saw that Manning had hit the keynote of the Mounted Police. They never gave up, never stopped planning for the morrow, and fighting through today, while life lasted.

And once and for all they never thought or even admitted that they were in such desperate plight that they could not fight their way out.

A hail from Constable Bushwick called the entire party to the upper room of the house. Manning alone was later instructed to bury the antelope's flesh after he had dressed it, in the cool moist earth on the floor of the block-house.

"Cached thus," said Waring, "it will keep sweet and palatable for two weeks anyway. We ought to live two weeks on the supplies we now have."

"Hurry up, Waring," came the cry from Bushwick, "the enemy are coming in force."

Waring saw that this was so when he placed his eyes at a loop-hole.

"They are going to rush us," he shouted, "every one get ready to repel the boarders."

The sight was an inspiring one. More than fifty Indians came streaming from the forest out into the open, and deployed in true Indian fashion in no apparent order, but really with quite a bit of strategy. Each painted warrior acted it would seem in a perfectly independent fashion, but after a little study it could be seen that no one man presented much of his body to a marksman, yet all were in positions to shoot and kill, with the least possible danger to themselves.

Every warrior bore the startlingly truculent war-paint of the Cree tribe. Every man was naked to the waist, and bore side arms, a rifle, and keen Indian hunting knives, used equally to slay man or beast. All wore the long black hair of the tribe flowing on their chests, and down their shoulders, and each presented the peculiar head-dress of the nation, which was made by drawing the hair at the forehead into a sort of apex, behind which was the scalp lock, allowed to grow extremely long.

"What an awfully savage band," cried Miss Elting. "I shudder at our fate if we are captured."

"Well you may," rejoined Miss Bennington. "What a terrible situation we are in."

"Get ready to fire," shouted Waring.

The muzzles of rifles were hurried into the depths of the loop-holes each man taking his place with a calm tenseness that showed he would fight to the bitter death.

"Aim," yelled Waring.

"Hold on," cried Constable Casey, "they are flying a flag of truce."

"What?" asked Waring in astonishment. "A flag of truce from a band of savages. I never heard of such a thing. They never give quarter and never ask for it."

Nevertheless Casey was right. A solitary man could be seen walking slowly toward the block-house. In his hand was a long staff to which was fastened a white handkerchief.

"It is a flag of truce," at length said Waring who had been watching the approaching man through his field service glasses. "It's a flag of truce all right—and, by Jove, it's carried by a white man."

"A white man among the Crees," jeered Constable Manning, "nonsense. Your glasses aren't telling you the truth."

"Yes they are," rejoined Waring. "Look now."

Casey took a second look.

"By crimeney you're right," he answered. "It's a white man sure as I am a Mounted Policeman."

The figure by this time was in plain sight not fifty feet away.

"Halt," commanded Waring. "What is your business with us?"

"I bear a flag of truce," replied the oncomer.

"We respect the flag. You may draw nearer," rejoined Waring.

The figure stepped to within twenty feet of the block-house. It was that of a man of about twenty-five years of age. He was more than six feet tall, with a very powerful heavy form, that showed his great strength. His face was swarthy, almost Indian in its shape. Yet at the same time in the curve of his chin, there was something that showed white blood.

"It's a half-breed," whispered Bushwick to Manning. "The meanest critter on earth is a Cree and white half-breed. That fellow is one of them."

"Do you know him?" questioned Waring in a low tone of all his men.

All shook their heads.

The figure sank the handle of the flag of truce deep within the turf upon which he was standing and raised his arms to show the men in the block-house that he carried no weapons.

He was dressed in a long close fitting antelope buckskin half jacket, half blouse, worn by a North-West Scout. It was dyed in the natural color, a yellowish tan, of the average antelope. Thus it was hardly a conspicuous color and melted into the green background of the forest so that one wearing such a coat could not be easily seen.

On the man's legs were deer-skin leggings that came high upon his thigh. These met a short pair of knee trousers also of deer-skin, and upon his head was a coon-skin cap, rough finished with the little animal's tail at the peak.

His face was seamed deep with scars, giving him a hideous appearance. His black eyes roved free hither and thither, as if he was challenging every man upon whom they rested to battle. His was a daring, sinister figure.

"What a horrible man," gasped Miss Elting to her companion.

Caroline Bennington shuddered.

Both girls felt in some way a terrible feeling of repulsion as they looked at the bold rover; why they did not know. They saw why a moment later.

"I come under a flag of truce," spoke the figure, "because I want to give you people in the block-house one chance of life."

"Thank you," mocked Waring.

"You need not mock me," replied the figure. "It is true. We have you all in our power. We only need to stay here cutting off your escape to starve you out sooner or later. You may resist a week, two weeks, a month, but you must surrender at last. That we know. You can not last forever."

Waring knew that the man was speaking the truth.

"Before I go further I must know who you are," Waring shouted across the little moat to the stranger.

The man drew up his tall form until he seemed to tower into the sky. He folded his arms across his brawny chest.

"My name is Jules de Cruces," he said with immense dignity.

"What," replied Waring, "not Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout?"

"Fools call me by the latter name; my friends by the first names as I have told you."

The faces of Marion Elting, and Caroline Bennington were white with terror. They knew of the fearful crimes of the man before them. They had heard of his fiendish cruelty, his awful reckless daring.

"Fool or not, I know of you Jules de Cruces," answered Waring. "And who knows of you knows only of evil."

"My compliments to you, fair sir, for your compliment to me," rejoined the renegade scout. "But to whom am I in turn addressing my conversation?"

"To Constable Clifford Waring, of the Royal North-West Mounted Police in charge of this command."

"A brave man I know," replied de Cruces as he doffed his coon-skin cap and bowed low. "I shall deem it an honor, sir, to cut your throat ere long."

"Never cut a throat till you get the throat in your grasp," said Waring with a sneer.

"I have your throat so near my grasp that the cutting is only a detail."

De Cruces laughed as he made this remark.

"If you do not mind we will abstain from throat slitting for awhile, and learn why you are here?" queried Waring.

"To do you a favor," replied de Cruces.

"How?"

"You will admit that you can not escape?"

"I admit nothing."

"Take it from me that you can not. Granting me that basis, that you can not escape me, it is in my province to offer you terms, and mercy."

"Terms from Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout?" It is to laugh," replied Waring. "Mercy from him, nonsense!"

"You may be disappointed," rejoined de Cruces. "I offer you terms first."

"What are they?"

"All of your men, with what arms, ammunition, and provisions, you have may march from your block-house unmolested."

"Well?"

"Save one man."

"Who is he?"

"Inspector Frederick Ellis, in chief command of you all."

"I see."

"The women of your party?" added de Cruces, "are to be delivered up to me at once."

"My God," cried Marion Elting. Caroline Bennington sank half fainting upon the floor.

A wave of awful anger swept over the four men. With difficulty Waring restrained his companions from shooting de Cruces dead in his tracks.

"Restrain yourselves," shouted Waring in warning. "He is under a flag of truce. Eternal shame would be ours if we killed him while thus protected."

Finally in a voice trembling with anger Waring addressed de Cruces.

"Only a cur half-breed would have made such a proposal to me," he said.

"Cur or not," replied de Cruces. "They are the only terms I will offer you."

"I refuse to accept them. Only over my dead body

will you make your way to the ladies placed in our charge. I will deliver them alive, well, unhurt at their destination or die in the attempt.

"What a noble remark," said de Cruces. "It does you so much honor. But how, pray, are you going to break through our lines? We are in numbers, both white and red men of daring, and we do not intend to let you escape."

"Well, any way, we refuse your offer," continued Waring.

"Very good," rejoined de Cruces. "Now then having rejected my offer of terms of mercy I will add something more. We shall capture you, and torture every man to death in your party. Is Miss Elting there?"

"She is," came loud and clear from Marion Elting.

"What do you want of her?"

"Only to tell her that her bridegroom is here," mocked de Cruces. "Within one hour after her capture she will grace my tepee as my bride."

"Never!" replied Miss Elting. "Before that moment a bullet will have taken my life. I would rather die by my own hand than live to become your unwilling wife."

"I thank you indeed, fair lady," answered de Cruces.

"But you will not die and you will not escape me. Your friend and companion will be held for ransom which if not forthcoming will lead to her wedding with a young Cree Chief."

"Never!" answered Miss Bennington. "I too will die ere I enter into any such awful union."

"Ladies I congratulate you," smiled de Cruces. "Such unanimity of sentiment does you great honor. I hate to appear as the Hated Bridegroom; but I needs must, I see."

"Now get you gone," put in Waring. "Kindly hurry. I can no longer restrain my men. They say they will shoot you as you stand, flag of truce or no flag of truce, if you do not leave at once."

"Very good. I have only one thing more to say. That is this. Tell your commander, if you ever see him again, that when I capture him I will tear him limb from limb, I will make him eat his heart, and will mock him as he dies a lingering death in agony."

"If Fred Ellis branded you as a cowardly traitor he told the truth, did he not?" sneered Waring. "But remember first to catch your hare before you cook it. The torture plan we will postpone until later. Now you make tracks or I will kill you myself."

Without further speech Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout, turned in his tracks and rapidly rejoined his companions. The action was the signal for a rain of shots that pattered about the block-house, and buried their leaden messages deep in the heavy timbers of the block-house.

"Well we know where we stand, anyway," remarked Waring as he calmly loaded, fired, loaded again, while the screams of pain that came to his ears from the savage horde showed that many of his shots met their billet. His companions used their weapons with the same skill, and under the rain of bullets that swept the enemy's ranks they were soon forced to seek shelter.

"My God! Fire! Fire! Waring, here, quick, for God's sake!"

Waring dashed to the opposite side of the block-house from where he stood, at the cry of Constable Casey.

"What is it?" he shouted, suspecting some deviltry of the Crees had been begun.

Hardly believing his eyes he saw a tremendous, a terrible sight.

The moat around the block-house was a mass of livid flames. Great stripes of fiery red flame were shooting all over the deep waters of the ditch. Dense masses of thick, choking smoke, rolled into the block-house.

The little arm of the Athabasca Lake which had been diverted to make the block-house ditch was seen to be on fire its entire length. Wherever Waring looked he saw only flame and smoke.

"Good God!" he cried, "de Cruces diverted our attention under a flag of truce until he got ready to try to drive us out by the awful ordeal of fire and smoke. Boys, if we don't quell those flames we are lost."

"Lead on," cried Manning. "We will follow you into the Jaws of Hell itself."

"Forward then, boys. We must fight fire now instead of Red Devils."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ORDEAL BY FIRE.

The party in the block-house dashed to the lower floor. Quick as a wink Waring swung open the big door.

As he did so he stood face to face with a gigantic Cree Indian.

In the Indian's hand was a keen knife. He had raised it ready to strike.

Waring could not escape. He knew the blow would descend before he could possibly draw any weapon.

Behind him was his men, to be sure, but they were fifteen feet away, and the swirling smoke and flame obscured their view. They did not see his peril.

Waring gave himself up for lost. He raised his arm to ward off the blow but he knew it was useless. He was as good as a dead man.

"Crack!"

Right at his ear rang the sharp report of a revolver. The savage crumpled up in a heap, and went down backward into the moat, slowly sinking amid the flame and smoke, beneath the brackish water.

"Who saved me," yelled Waring as he turned to thank his preserver.

There stood Marion Elting her face lighted with battle fever, her eyes shining like two stars in a deep blue sky at night, and in her hand a smoking revolver showed that her deadly aim had saved Waring's life and sent another Indian to his last account.

"Did you shoot that big brute?" asked Waring.

"Yes," replied Miss Elting.

"Good shot."

"Thank you, but it's horrible to kill a human being even if it was only a savage who had to die that I might live."

"Never mind that," rejoined Waring. "Can you guard the block-house door—you and Caroline Bennington while we men try to quell the flames?"

"Yes," answered the brave girl.

Waring led his men directly to the moat. The devilish plot of the enemy was then seen in its full purpose.

The enemy had poured many barrels of crude petroleum upon the waters of the arm to Athabasca Lake, which fed the moat, or ditch about the block-house.

The deadly liquid had then floated down to the moat-

ditch and after the entire surface of the water was covered with the petroleum, de Cruces had ordered the liquid lighted.

In a second the entire surface of the river or arm of the lake was ablaze.

The flames and smoke de Cruces thought ought to smoke out the little band of block-house defenders. He had posted a Cree Indian near the entrance to the door of the block-house whence he had gone in the obscurity of the smoke and flame. Marion Elting's splendid shot had robbed the enemy of its first real chance of entrance to the block-house.

"We must smother the flames," cried Waring to his men as he rapidly surveyed the scene. "Water would only make them burn more wildly."

With hands, with bits of wood grasped and torn from the earth, the party dug deep into the earth and began flinging dirt upon the water.

"Never mind the water," shouted Waring. "That stuff will burn itself out in time. Stick to the block-house. Don't let the flames set it on fire. That is our only hope."

"Where in the name of the foul fiend did those rascals find this petroleum?" asked Constable Bushwick.

"There's crude petroleum springs up on the lake about a mile away" answered Waring who knew the country thereabout well, having been sent there several years ago, on duty by his commanding officer.

"This is some of the *renegade scout's* work," gasped Constable Casey as he wiped the sweat from his brow, and coughed, and gasped and smoked as he expressed it, in the infernal flames that raged about him.

"Of course it is," replied Waring. "No Indian Cree would have the ingenuity to think up this plot. They are devilish enough along their own lines, but this is the product of a trained mind. It's a half-breed Cree-White idea and in spite of our peril I can't help admiring de Cruces."

"He likes smoked Mounted Police I guess," snapped Casey.

"I'm baked as it is. Wish I had a fork. Some one then could see if I was done," put in Constable Bushwick.

"We will all be done brown-on-both-sides-and-turned-over-by the Crees to brown over again if we let the block-house catch fire," laughed Constable Manning.

Laughing at death, working, fighting, all "in the day's work," as the voice of Waring put it, the devoted band worked like mad throwing earth on the block-house, until the cool moist virgin soil had wrapped the timbers of the house in a misty vapor through which the leaping flames could not penetrate.

"The block-house is saved," at length said Waring. "The flames will soon burn themselves out on the surface of the waters of the ditch."

"But the waters are poisoned for our use" mourned Casey.

"And we have only a barrel in the block-house," mournfully replied Waring. "And not much to eat. I guess that de Cruces was right. We will have to fall into his hands sooner or later."

"Not much," answered Casey, gallant Casey, who started in life in Dublin as a lawyer and came to Britian's American possessions merely from sheer love of adventure. "We will starve, die, and the last man will go with our song on his lips."

He caught up the air of the old epic of the Mounted Police as he spoke.

"Fever, frost and hunger,
Thirst 'neath a cloudless sky;
Bullet, spear and knife thrust—
Thus do your wastrels die."

Casey's voice roared high upon the air. Waring, Bushwick, Manning, all joined in and in the face of dread death by torture, the little party of gallant men roared their defiance to the sky.

"There be Titans in these days" quoted Marion Elting as she and Caroline Bennington kept "the gate as did Horatius of old," and quite as bravely. "Was ever such a band of men. They are the wonders of the new world, to be sure. Brave, and loyal band, I hope you will win this great battle; and get safe to your friends."

"Take care," broke in the voice of Caroline Bennington at this point. It roused Marion Elting from her reverie.

"There's some one coming through the smoke and flame," continued Caroline.

Both girls watched an oncoming figure. They could see it rapidly advancing through the smoke and flame to the right of the block-house and where it could not be seen by Waring and his companions.

Marion raised her revolver.

Caroline followed her example.

"It's an Indian," whispered Marion.

"No—it's not tall enough," replied Caroline.

"It's an Indian," insisted Marion, "but it is an Indian girl."

As she spoke the form of "The Dawn" the beautiful Indian wife of the renegade scout, dashed up to the two wandering girls, and breathless sank at their feet.

"Do not shoot," the Indian girl murmured. "I am your friend."

"What do you wish?" replied Marion Elting her hand still grasping her revolver. She still feared this arrival was the signal for more treachery.

"To save you," rejoined "The Dawn."

"Can you do that?"

"I do not know yet, I hope so."

"How?"

"Tell Clifford Waring that the block-house is built over a great underground cavern."

"I see."

"And this cavern leads to an underground stream of water; really a creek."

"Yes."

"It looks deeper than it is. It can be forded."

"I understand."

"Tell him that it will take him to Athabasca Lake. Tell him to find the secret entrance to the cavern. I do not know it. When he finds it make all speed. Reach the lake at early midnight."

"You mean tonight?"

"I do."

"Proceed."

"When he reaches the lake tell him to listen to the thrice repeated cry of the Rocky Mountain lion."

"Yes."

"The thrice repeated cry will be followed by an interval of silence. Then the cry will be repeated twice."

"Well?"

"Then he will know that I am near. I will join

him as soon after the cry as possible. Tell him and his men to take care and not shoot me."

"And next?"

"I will tell him what to do next."

"When?"

"When I meet him at the lake side. Tell him that this is his only chance for escape. Tell him as he loves his life to do as I have requested."

In a moment like the mist torn to shreds by the early morning sun, the form of the Indian girl disappeared in the dense smoke that hemmed in the block-house.

Marion Elting called Waring quickly to her side. Then she told him of the Indian girl's message.

"I am at a loss what to do," he said to Marion. "This may be an ambuscade. I never heard of any Indian girl named 'The Dawn.'"

But Marion with a woman's intuition strongly urged following the Indian girl's advice. She was strongly seconded by Caroline Bennington.

"I do not know why I feel so," urged Marion, "but that girl never risked her life in flame and smoke, was treacherous to her race, the Crees, unless she intended to help us. As it is we can't fight here much longer. We must evacuate this place, or be captured."

"That is a verity," sighed Waring. "But shall we leave our brave Commander, Fred Ellis behind?"

"What other course can we take?" put in Constable Casey, who had drawn near to listen to the conversation. "Ellis is no child. He told us to escape if we could. He paved the way for us to reach this block-house. It's nonsense for us to say we 'sacrifice him' by trying this Indian girl's plan. He would be the first if he was with us, to command us to try this only hope of an escape."

"But are we not going into an ambuscade?" anxiously objected Waring.

"Well if we are, it's short sweet death," rejoined Constable Manning. "I'd rather die by a bullet that kills quick, than die here like a smoked herring."

"It's all very well to talk," interjected Caroline Bennington, "but first is there a secret entrance to the cavern described by the girl?"

"That's horse sense," admitted Constable Bushwick with a glance of admiration at Caroline.

"My plan is that you men search for the secret entrance to the cavern," replied Marion, "while we two women cook dinner. I'm getting famished."

Such an eminently practical view of the situation appealed to all. Waring immediately ordered Casey and Bushwick to try to find the secret of the cavern. Manning was ordered to watch for the enemy, while the girls began cutting up antelope steak from the animal Manning's valor had secured for the party.

Soon a life giving meal was ready. The party ate with the hunger of half starved people.

Refreshed, the search for the secret cavern was rapidly continued.

Hours thus passed.

The enemy seemed to be secure in the ultimate capture of the party, and made no attacks. A shot or two came now and then from the fringe of forest just to let the beleaguered ones understand that the enemy was still about them.

Every inch of turf, all the dirt in the cellar was pried into by the party and turned over and over. Nothing was learned of the secret of the cavern.

"There is no secret cavern," at length said Waring in disgust.

He leaned against one of the timbers of the block-house as he spoke.

He felt the timber tremble under his hand.

He pressed harder.

The timber was an inner one, he saw, and did not effect the great outer trees, that made up the block-house.

With all his great strength Waring pressed hard upon the timber. It gave with his pressure, slid downward, hesitated a moment, and then slowly sank to the earth showing a great hole in the flooring of the block-house, or rather in the earth that made up the flooring.

A steep flight of steps could be seen in the hole leading to its depths.

"Hurrah!" yelled Waring in glee, "I've found the way to the cavern."

All rushed to his side.

Joy sat on every face. The party now began to believe that the Indian girl had told the truth, and that they would escape.

"Pack up all the provisions," ordered Waring. "When the men are all ready let each carry part of the antelope and the remainder of the flour. It may save our lives by doing thus."

Preparations were immediately begun for the start.

"When the moon shows we are nearing midnight," counseled Waring, "then we start."

Accordingly at that time the start was made.

"I will lead," said Waring. "Miss Elting and Miss Bennington will come next. Then Casey, you come, with Manning right behind you, and Bushwick bringing up the rear."

"Here is a lot of pine knots to light us on our way," put in Casey.

"Brilliant Casey," answered Waring, "always looking out for us some way or another."

Lighting a large knot which gave out sufficient smoky light for the party to proceed by, Waring dropped down the ladder.

His torch showed him a wonderful scene.

He stood in the center of a great cavern. Stalactites like glittering icicles hung from the vaulted roof of the great subterranean vault. The cavern was floored with fine white sand. In its center was running a perfectly clear stream of water.

The scene was a beautiful one. Waring exclaimed at the wonders of the cavern and made haste to get his party down the ladder where they could see the wonderful place they had unearthed.

The last man to descend took care to see that the panel of the block-house which had shown the way to the secret cavern was placed back in position. No Cree or vagrant white man could possibly discover the secret entrance so the white party was safe from pursuit.

Waring led the party to the banks of the stream of water. Remembering the advice of the Indian maiden he plunged boldly in. The water only came to his knees.

The women in the party were all dressed in the short skirts with leggings, and blouse, worn by women when traveling in the North West, and so they followed boldly after Waring. Behind came the rest of the party.

At first the stream flowed beneath high roofs, and it was easy to proceed. Then the way became more difficult. Waring staggered along in the lead but at

times so narrow was the stream that he had hard work to squeeze by the sloping sides.

The water soon became deeper and at points reached up to his waist. The stream was also so swift as to make it almost impossible to keep his footing.

Marion Elting, and Caroline Bennington were often in bodily danger as the march progressed. Once or twice they would have sunk beneath the water and would have drowned by losing their footing, if one of the Constables had not come to their rescue.

But by dint of great labor all managed to keep alive, and in a few minutes had become used to the swift rush of water, and kept their footing better.

"Do you think we shall ever see Inspector Ellis again?" asked Marion Elting of Waring, when the water began to get smoother.

"I hope so," he replied. "Ellis is a man of resources and brains. I will admit that it was a daring thing to do to bring upon himself all the wrath of the Crees and of de Cruces, but it really was the only thing to do under the circumstances."

"It was a very noble thing to do," remarked Marion.

Waring opened his eyes.

He was so used to desperate deeds that the heroism of Ellis did not strike him.

"Why Ellis isn't looking for any hero limelight," Waring added. "There isn't a man in the Mounted Police that wouldn't do the same thing. That's what he is an Inspector for; just to do that kind of work for his pay you see, is his way of looking at it."

"Can money pay for his placing his life in jeopardy for all of us?"

"Bless your pretty face, Miss Elting, don't worry. Fred Ellis isn't going to die this trip. No Cree or dirty half-breed like de Cruces is going to get him. Don't you worry."

"I hope not. I should not wish to think that he gave his life so that I might live."

This point of view made Waring open his eyes still wider.

The Mounted Police was filled with a heterogeneous crowd of men. One man talked to you in the broad Cockney of London; the next Constable spoke in the swift drawl of the best London clubs. This Constable was a son of illustrious descent, that a peasant lad from Ireland. But no matter where he came from the Constable was a brave man. Death to him must have no terrors. In fact Waring never thought of sudden death by violence at all. He just pattered onward, wondering why all this fuss was being made over Ellis.

"Ellis would swear if he heard all that praise," thought Waring. "Oh women are so emotional."

The party all this time had kept pressing onward.

The stream must have been several hundred feet underground, Waring was confident. It was without question coming from Athabasca Lake. It was proving every moment to all that the Indian girl had not been telling an untruth. Waring's heart began to beat high with hope of escape. It began to look as if the Indian girl would save them.

Unconsciously Marion Elting had taken the lead as Waring slowed his steps owing to his pondering in his mind the best course to take when Lake Athabasca was reached. Marion's companion had joined her in the lead and as the water had shallowed to hardly depth enough to cover the girl's shoes, they ran forward gaily.

Waring's broodings were broken into by a sharp cry from Marion.

"Help! Help!" she said.

Drawing his revolver Waring rushed to her aid.

A fearful sight met his eye as he rounded a turn. Marion and Caroline stood hand in hand in the center of the stream.

Coiled directly in their path was a tremendous rattlesnake.

The venomous creature was sounding his terrible death warning with his rattles.

"B-rb-rb-rb-rbr-b-r-zip!" went the rattles. Like the noise of a thousand snare drummers the sound seemed to beat into Waring's brain.

The reptile was swaying back and forth, trying to draw himself together so as to strike one of the girls.

Fascinated by the glancing head and beady eyes of the snake, neither girl seemed able to move.

The snake reared his head.

He coiled himself back like some gigantic spring.

He was getting ready to strike. His striking distance was just his own length, and Waring saw with awful foreboding that the two helpless girls were in the danger zone.

The snake raised his ugly head. He poised himself ready to strike one or both of the frightened, defenseless girls. A wound from his fangs, far removed as they were from all medical aid, meant sure and painful death.

Again the snake poised himself for the final blow.

"My God," gasped Waring, "can nothing save those poor girls?"

CHAPTER V.

INSPECTOR ELLIS'S DILEMMA.

Inspector Frederick Ellis, was certainly in a fearful plight.

Face to face with the fierce mountain lion, he dared not shoot for fear of bringing the hostile Crees, and murderous whites, and half-breeds, in the Cree band, to cut his throat in a moment, or far worse, to capture him for dreadful torture.

"Shall I shoot?" thought Ellis.

The angry cat circled about him. Its eyes burned with hate. It was about to spring upon the brave Inspector.

"I must shoot," whispered Ellis. "There is no other way out of it. I can't stop here to be torn to bits by this infernal lion. Well here goes."

Suiting the action to the word Ellis took steady aim.

The lion gave a low wailing cry.

It was ready now to make its death giving spring.

Ellis aimed for the spot between the creature's eyes. He intended putting his rifle bullet in the center of the creature's brain.

Just as he was pressing the trigger of the rifle to deliver its murderous fire there came a crashing at the left, in the underbrush of the forest.

Both the lion and Ellis heard the noise. The animal backed away a few steps, and whined uneasily. It looked toward the point where the noise was heard and then opened its mouth and gave its peculiar long bleating baby-like cry.

Ellis could plainly see the deadly fangs of the infuriated creature. He thought best as he saw the cat back away, to hold his fire for a second. It was best to wait and investigate the noise. If it was a Cree In-

dian he would need his shot not for the lion but for his new foe.

The crashing noise came nearer.

Again the lion gave its shuddering cry.

A roar from the bushes answered.

With a splendid leap from the underbrush darted a great Rocky Mountain bear. Its little eyes were sparkling with hate. Its fur stood up on its back, its entire attitude was that of vengeance.

Quick as the lightning's stroke, before the lion could make a single movement the bear sprang upon it.

With a wild scream of pain and rage the lion grappled with its foe. The growls of the bear, fierce, terrible, awoke the echoes on the distant mountains.

The angry yells of the lion could be heard above all the din. It fought for life, well knowing that it could not cope successfully with an infuriated bear.

The two creatures rolled over and over, biting, scratching, fighting like mad.

Ellis saw his chance.

He made a little circuit in the woods leaving the fighting animals to settle the matter between them.

"Fight ye devils I hate to see peace," said Ellis, in the words of the fighting Irishman, Constable Casey. "I will make my escape while you settle your little personal feud."

Resuming the trail quickly Ellis hurried onward. His idea was to get as soon as possible to the block-house. He feared that his presence was needed there. One man away from the feeble ranks of his companions made a shortage that would be felt when rifles were needed to repel the foe.

It was pitch dark. Ellis stumbled along the trail, which made a little winding path around great trees, through long stretches of heavy grass, among numberless dense masses of underbrush, at a speed that was wonderful under the circumstances.

Around him wild creatures of all kinds stumbled, and halted to see this wonderful man who was hurrying by them. Bears, lions, wolves, coyotes, and deer stood in amazement, or slunk into forest fastness as Ellis hurried onward.

The cries of the startled beasts awoke the forest and made Ellis fear that the wily savages would take alarm. So skilled in all matters of woodcraft are the Crees that they could tell that a white man was proceeding through the woods, by the startled cries of the wild animals.

"I must take this chance any way," remarked Ellis, as he kicked a startled rabbit that sprang upon his foot, easily into the bushes, where it vanished in a jiffy. "Even if the Indians are warned I must press forward with all my speed."

Soon Ellis stopped to get his bearings.

He halted at the foot of one of the tallest trees in the forest. It was the great-grandfather of all the trees above it, towering high above its fellows, like a light-house on a prominent bit of headland on some distant sea.

Ellis swung his rifle over his shoulder, its muzzle hanging straight down his back. Then he fastened the weapon in this position by his belt, and was thus able to scale the tree, and yet carry his rifle with him.

This was a bold bit of woodcraft, taught him by many a similar stress in his wild past.

Pulling the holsters which held his two large revolvers, and seeing that each weapon was well loaded Ellis grasped the lowest branch of the big tree, with a

spring from the earth to do so, and in a moment was ensconced safely in the branches.

It was wonderful to watch the Inspector's ascent.

Not a leaf, not a branch stirred. He swarmed upward as easily as a bird soars through the atmosphere, and with no more disturbance.

When about two-thirds of the way up, Ellis forged rapidly along a big limb, and testing one that he thought would fully bear his weight, he began cautiously to edge toward the end of the limb.

"If I slip I go rattling down two hundred feet or more to death," Ellis thought. "But I won't slip."

Soon he was at the extreme end of the limb, which swayed under his form in a dizzy manner, but did not break.

Ellis from his perch looked about him. All around was the magnificent forest. The early dawn was just breaking in the Eastern sky. It gave to the forest that shade of gray that warns the creatures of the night that it is time to flee to hidden haunts.

An owl hooted in the far distance. The cry of a loon came distant and faint from a hill at the right. A coyote yelped and snarled at his left. Night birds made queer humming sounds about him.

But Ellis paid no attention to all the sounds from the animal and bird world. He was used to it. It affected him not as much as would the roar of traffic in a great city. He was a man of the woods, not of the pavements. All the sounds merely told him that day was breaking, just as the yell of the milkman in the city tells the city man, that day is here again.

With great care Ellis scanned the picture from his dizzy view point. He took from his pocket his night glasses, powerful yet easy to carry. Through his glasses the blur of the early dawn whirled into distinctness. Objects that he could not see with his naked eye became plain.

He glossed over familiar wood pictures without a second glance.

"By Jove," he suddenly said.

His glasses became riveted on the trail toward the block-house. He gazed for a long time.

"Hum!" he said at last. "Indians."

His glass moved a bit to the West.

"One," he counted.

"Two," said he a moment later.

"Three-four-five"—Five big Crees, all painted—'War!' Stepping each in the first man's footsteps as they come along in 'Indian file.' Thus if I saw their tracks I would think that only one Indian had passed. Cute lot of savage brutes, are these Crees, now are they not?"

The Indians proceeded with great speed down the trail. He could see that each was well armed. All were going at the speed which indicated that they were on a special errand.

"If they haven't got wind that I am on this trail," whispered Ellis, "I'll eat my blooming old hat."

Still the Inspector watched the five savages.

"It's quite a bit of odds," he said, "against me. There's five Indians in that pack, and one white man up this tree. Well, one white man in the East they say is better than five Indians. But put one against five out here in these woods, and I guess it isn't fighting but diplomacy that will win the game."

While he was talking as the woodsman gets to do in the vast solitudes where for months he is alone, steadily to himself, Ellis swept the horizon with his glasses.

Hardly a mile away he could see the glint of the waters of Lake Athabasca. The block-house he knew was hidden somewhere in the middle distance. He took out his pocket compass and adjusted it. He saw that he was near the block-house, and within an easy run from the shores of the lake.

The presence of the Indians, he thought, showed further that his calculations were correct.

That the block-house was besieged he knew. If this was so from the direction the Indians were coming it was his plan to the mind of Ellis, that they were a part of the besieging force. From their position on the trail which he had been following it was equally sure that they knew he was trying to reach the block-house by this path.

"I should say that the Indians who thought they had me hemmed in back at the Buffalo wallow, had discovered my ruse," thought Ellis. "They then tracked me to the trail. Seeing at once that I was making for the block-house, they sent a swift Indian runner, or messenger to tell Jules de Cruces, who I suspect is heading the block-house besiegers, that he had better intercept me. Then de Cruces, who is a good fighter, if he is a fearful scoundrel, sent back those five Indians to kill me. Well, I am not dead yet."

Ellis remained quietly in his perch for some time longer. Again he found himself in a puzzling position. He saw his way to the block-house was going to be fiercely disputed. The enemy knew of his intentions, that was a verity. But how to thwart their plans to get his life before he could rejoin his friends was the problem before Ellis.

A thousand ideas chased through the unfortunate man's mind. He was at a loss to know what was best to do; what course to take.

At length he hit upon a plan.

"I must make a wide detour through the trackless forest," he thought. "I may be lost within its depth, but I must run the risk. I have hardtack in my pocket to last for another twenty-four hours. I could subsist on the game in which this country abounds if I dared fire at any creature. But to shoot means my own death warrant. The Indians would be on me in a trice after my shot was fired. It's a funny position this liable to starve in the midst of plenty."

Even Ellis who was not much given to laughter could not withhold a smile at the queer situation he found himself in.

After sweeping the scene again with his glass and not being able to see the party of five savages again Ellis began the descent from his tree.

Noiselessly, carefully, he climbed backward until he reached the leafy seclusion of the lower branches. Cautiously Ellis waited a few moments before descending.

It was fortunate that he did so.

For, as he gazed, from up the trail came the five Indians.

A burly savage led the party. Ellis saw his head bore the grinning jaws of a grizzly bear, entwined in his long black hair. Around the Indian's neck was a string of bear claws, that shone white in the faint pink of the early morning sun, which had just begun to rise.

The Indian wore a short jacket of deer-skin, fringed with dyed feathers from an eagle. His arms were bare to the shoulder, and around each arm at regular intervals was entwined a rough, but burnished copper band, that shone like dull gold.

The savage carried a long rifle. Its dull finish muzzle coldly gave back a sinister reflection. Around the Indian's waist was strapped a deer-skin belt, in which was stuck a tomahawk. The usual long trimmed leggings, and moccasins completed the attire of the leader of the truculent party.

"Great Bear," said Ellis to himself. "He is a chief of note. They send no boy to do a man's work I see. Very flattering to my pride. *The renegade scout*, Jules de Cruces, does me much honor in his selection of the man to command a party who are to kill me."

Great Bear was noted among the Crees for his blood-thirsty disposition. His record as a brave chief had been made years before. Alone he had entered a cave in which lurked a wounded she-bear, the most dangerous animal in all the great North-West, and had an hand to hand fight, killed the animal, and the head dress and the necklace the chief now wore, was taken from the bear he had slain. For this deed he had been named by the Head Chief of the Wood Crees, Piapet, himself, "Great Bear." It was a proud name, proudly and brilliantly gained, and ever since the name was given him, Great Bear had risen in the opinion of the Crees, until he became famous as a warrior and orator among his people.

Stepping each in the foot-print of the Indian ahead of him, and going at incredible swiftness, under the circumstances, the Indians disappeared in the fastness of the forest in the direction from whence Ellis had come.

Ellis could not help admiring the strategy of the Indians. He could see from his perch that the foot-prints left behind looked exactly as if one man instead of five had passed.

"Fine bit of work," remarked Ellis. "Couldn't be beaten. If I hadn't seen the five men, and had only that foot-print to go by, I would be sure that only one foe lurked in the forest. That's Indian nature. Five to one seems fair to them."

Then waiting until he felt sure that he was alone and that the Indians had passed, Ellis swiftly let himself down from the tree.

His feet had not touched the ground when, with the speed of the tiger's leap, three Indians grappled with him.

He had been tricked.

Three Indians had been detached from the party of five by Chief Great Bear who with Indian cunning after he had detected in wily Indian fashion, Ellis in the tree, had let no sign escape him that Ellis had been discovered.

He had kept on his swift way as if Ellis was not seen. Then in the shelter of the forest he had detached three of his force to trap the white man.

The struggle was brief and short. Three Indians found it no easy mark that they had made when they tried to capture Ellis. He fought with splendid courage.

Shaking himself loose from his captors he gave the leading Indian a mighty blow straight from the shoulder in true prize fighter fashion. The savage curled up like a dry leaf under the autumn sun.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten down and out," counted Ellis in true ring side time-keeper fashion. The savage did not stir.

The blow had broken his neck. He never would rise again.

Meanwhile Ellis had been struggling with the remaining two Indians.

He shook them both off with splendid strength. They could have stabbed him or shot him at any time, he knew, but saw from their efforts that they had been ordered to capture him alive.

Around the tree the bitter battle raged.

The ground was torn up in every direction by the tremendous effort of the fighters. At length Ellis shook off both of the savages.

His hand closed on the hilt of his revolver.

Bang! went the big 45 caliber weapon.

Ellis had pressed its muzzle close to the nearest Indian's breast as he pulled the trigger.

The Indian, a stalwart young buck, evidently on his first war-path dropped dead in his tracks as he received the shot.

With a yell of triumph Ellis whirled around, his weapon ready to hurl death to the sole remaining savage.

Then the sky seemed to whirl into the earth. The earth disappeared into the sky in chaos.

Behind Ellis, Great Bear had crept, and with deadly intent had brought down upon the Inspector's unprotected head his tomahawk.

Ellis lay prone upon the ground as one dead. Great Bear with the light of battle in his eyes, stood over the prostrate white man and gave the battle cry of the Cree nation.

The odds of five to one, was too great for Frederick Ellis, but there to show his splendid fight lay two Indians, cold in death. Beside them lay the brave Inspector with the blood running down his face from the wound in his head.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRIAL BY TORTURE.

"It is a pity your head wasn't smashed in."

Through the throbbing in his brain, Frederick Ellis heard the words as from an immense distance.

At first he could not connect the words with himself. He was dead, he felt sure. He knew that he had not been dead long because some pain remained in his astral body.

"Let the Police dog lie in his own blood," continued the sneering voice.

Ellis sat up with amazing swiftness. The word "police" brought his wits back to him quickly.

He tried to rise.

He could not. He was bound in long strips of deer-skin ropes, to a tree. Around his legs were gyves of iron. He was shackled perfectly.

"I am a prisoner in the Cree camp," thought Ellis.

"Yes, you are a prisoner," continued the mocking voice as if reading the thoughts of Ellis.

Ellis came to himself with great rapidity.

He knew his fate now. He was a prisoner in the hands of the Cree Indians and their white allies, the blood-thirsty band of Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout.

"Oh, yes, you, the great Frederick Ellis, have been 'tricked by a renegade scout,' continued the mocking voice. "I am going to make you eat the title you gave me of the *renegade scout* in your own blood."

Ellis shook the clotted blood from his face and boldly faced his tormentor, whom he knew was the terrible Jules de Cruces.

"I defy you, you half-breed devil," sneered Ellis.

"Thank you," replied de Cruces, "you are in such a splendid position to defy me, or any other man."

"Still I defy you."

"Words, idle words. Just think. After all my plotting I have you in my power at last. It is a splendid moment for me."

Ellis laughed in scorn.

"Laugh on, you dog," continued de Cruces. "Laugh on. But I will laugh last and best. When you branded me in the eight districts which make up the baliwick's of the Mounted Police as a traitor and spy, you sealed your own death warrant."

"I only told the truth. You are a traitor. You sold to Chief Mistassini head of the Blackfeet tribe of Indians the fact that we were hunting him to arrest him for his running fight with the wily Sioux chief, Dacoma, when the Sioux pushed over into Canadian Indian territory, to escape the Mounted Scouts of America, a body akin to ours."

"Well what of it? Mistassini paid me in good gold."

"Which you gambled away in the dives of Dawson."

"Yes. And Chief Dacoma cost you much labor before you chased him back over the border into Montana, where the American Scouts soon penned him up in his reservation."

"You have plotted to make the Crees rise thinking you are Louis Reil in Rebellion against the Canadian Government."

"Exactly. But I am Louis Reil, come back to give you white interlopers the whipping that you deserve. I and my men, will drive you out of this great country. What right have you here? The Indian was here first. For unnumbered years he held this land. He was happy. You white men came. You took his land. You penned him in a tiny reservation. By what right have you done this thing? You are not over Lords for the Indian."

De Cruces's voice rose to a wild shriek as he spoke.

Ellis saw in a moment that the man was a half mad fanatic. He really believed that he was a reincarnation of Louis Reil, hanged for leading a great Canadian Rebellion against white authority. He was as dangerous a man, this de Cruces, *renegade scout* as he was, as ever was Louis Reil. He, de Cruces, had fanned the flame of insurrection along a wide district.

"If I can escape," thought Ellis, "I will not ask the Controller of our forces, at Ottaway for aid to quell this flame of Rebellion. I will fight it out with de Cruces and stop it myself with no other aid than my gallant band of Constables in the block-house."

"It will take more than five Mounted or Unmounted Policemen to quell the Rebellion I have started," put in de Cruces quick to read the thoughts of Ellis. "It will surely win."

"It will surely fail, and you will be killed as Louis Reil was," firmly replied Ellis.

"But not before you are dead," came the quick answer, as de Cruces turned on his heel and left Ellis a prey to bitter thoughts.

Ellis saw that his situation was desperate.

He had little hope of escape but firmly felt that it was his duty to fight for liberty, as long as his life lasted.

He glanced about cautiously.

He saw that he was in the heart of an Indian half-breed village. The smoke from several dozen tepees

showed that he had been carried to the center of the main body of Indians.

At the right of the tepees he could see half a dozen roughly made log cabins. These he knew at once were the living plates of the whites, and half-breeds in de Cruces' and Chief Piapet's ranks of warriors.

"Each white man has an Indian wife," said Ellis aloud. "Each half-breed has the same lot of slatterly women hanging about his neck. Not a white man here without a price upon his head. Not a man, white, red, or half white and half red, but is a murderer, a thug, a low outcast by choice, and not a man but whom would slit my throat and think the action fun, before breakfast."

Ellis watched the Indian women at work as he spoke. Some were cooking at an open fire. Others were grinding Indian corn in queer Indian-fashion by pounding it between a stone pestle, in a rude stone mortar, thus making flour for food.

Other women were scraping flesh from the skins of deer, antelope and bear, to make robes for the soon coming winter when the thermometer often came a sliding down the tube until it marked 70 degrees below zero.

A party of assorted warriors sat under a big tree gambling as usual, which was about all the warrior does when not hunting or on the war-path. The slaves of the tepee were the women. They did all the work. The braves, as the men were called, only fought and hunted.

"Think of Marion Elting and Caroline Bennington having to do menial labor as the wives of one of those awful scoundrels, or as the wife of the unspeakable traitor, Jules de Cruces."

Ellis shuddered. He saw quickly how he had become a prisoner. When he was fighting off the three Indians 'neath the great tree on the trail to the block-house "Great-Bear," the leader of the party had hurried to the aid of his bucks, and had struck Ellis to the earth with one blow of his tomahawk.

"He struck me with the flat side of the weapon, of course," cogitated Ellis. "He did not want to kill me or he would have used the weapon's keen edge. I see that I am reserved for torture."

Through the burning heat of the cloudless summer day Ellis tried to keep up his courage. The pain from his wounded head, his lack of water or food, made the day one that he saw, could not be followed by more days of its kind, and he remain alive.

At times Ellis thought that he would go mad. Strange thoughts seemed to sear his brain.

At one moment he was in his thoughts, swimming in a great lake of pure cold water, taking long draughts down his parched throat.

In the next breath the scene seemed to change and he felt the cool breath of the early night fan his brow, and seemed to be seated at a bountiful repast with his comrades once more. He could see the venison, the splendid mountain trout, the nice bear steak, the sage hens, and prairie chickens, under which the table groaned.

Then he would come to his senses again, and know that his parched tongue and empty stomach, meant that he was starving to death amid a savage horde of men in the depths of the great forest.

"Will death only come," groaned Ellis to himself after six hours of deadly agony.

Instead he heard a voice near him, so low, that he could hardly hear it, yet which penetrated his brain.

"Hist!" said the voice. "Turn your eyes to the left."

"Who are you?" whispered back Ellis.

"The Indian girl, 'The Dawn,'" replied the voice. "Courage."

"I haven't much left," faltered Ellis, "but what I have is still with me."

"You are a brave man," came the voice again, "do not despair."

"I will not."

"The Indians have forgotten you, in their plans to carry on the war against your race."

"Yes."

"There is a division in the ranks of your enemy."

"How?"

"Chief Piapet, Great Bear, and other Cree chiefs, are taxing my husband, Jules de Cruces, with paying too much attention to you, and your band of men. They say that now they have you a prisoner; they will devote tonight to the pleasure of your torture and death, and that as for those in the block-house it isn't worth the trouble it will take to capture them."

"I see."

"But my husband says that he will capture your band, put every man in it to death by torture, and will marry Marion Elting just as he has proposed, holding Caroline Bennington for ransom."

"The cowardly cur."

"There has been a pow-wow to decide what is best to be done. No decision has been reached as yet. They have not reached your case yet."

"Why?"

"The wife of one of the lesser chiefs has accused a fourteen year old boy with sending evil spirits into her body to cause her pain."

"Nonsense. She only has an attack of rheumatism."

"Be that as it may the woman has charged that she is the victim of evil spirits. The tribal Medicine man, Fordijway, asserts that the boy must die by the usual method by sun-down."

"What is the usual method?"

"Wait and you will see."

"When am I to be tortured?"

"Immediately after the sentence of death is carried out upon the boy."

"That is not long from now?"

"About an hour. Meanwhile take courage. They are going to send you food and drink soon, because you must be at your full strength when they begin their tortures. If they can get you to flinch, after you are fed, it will be looked upon as a great result. To make a victim show the White Feather of fear is to an Indian mind, the most disgraceful thing that they can witness."

"Well, I will show no fear."

"I know you will not. But remember this much, if I can save you I will. Good bye."

With her usual fleetness "The Dawn" vanished, leaving Ellis a prey to conflicting emotions. He knew that his chance of life was slim, but he was determined to die as a brave man should.

True to the prediction of the Indian girl, in a short time a Cree lad of about fourteen years of age came to where Ellis was bound and handed him some smoked venison, and a stone jar of water.

In spite of his shackles Ellis managed to eat some of the meat, and drink great draughts of the water. It put new life into his frame. The venison was none too clean or fresh, and the water was taken without question from a swamp but Ellis was too near death from starvation to be very critical. He ate the food, and thanked God for it as if it had been the most toothsome viand of a French chef's skill.

As he rolled to a half sitting position his heart almost stopped beating.

There lay, right within a few feet, his Bowie knife. He knew it was his from the ivory handle. There was on the handle his initials "F. E.," and he could see the golden letters glisten in the sun-light, which was just dying behind the trees of the forest in the West.

Had "The Dawn" placed the knife there? He well remembered flinging it into the heart of the Cree chief at the Buffalo wallow. Yet, here it was in plain view.

But how to get the weapon was a puzzle.

Ellis was bound tightly to the tree. He tried to spring backward and only succeeded in binding himself tighter.

He tried to roll toward the knife but his bonds would not admit of such action.

Then he tried a new plan.

He found by rolling to the full length of his bonds that he could just touch the knife with his out-stretched toe. Then gently he tried to catch the handle in his in-turned toes.

At first he was not successful.

Finally he managed to move the knife a trifle.

With great patience he tried, over, and over again, until at length he was rewarded. His efforts had loosened the knife.

Then by curving his limbs he managed to slowly draw the knife nearer, nearer, nearer, until with one push of wonderful address, he had the knife within his grasp.

He hid it quickly in the long leggings that swathed his right leg.

"I am at least not without some kind of a weapon," he said. "I fancy if I die I will send another Cree or white along to light my pathway into the other world before I follow."

As Ellis spoke he saw coming toward him a party of buck Indians led by Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout.

Ellis knew in a moment that the hour for his torture had struck.

From the oncoming party a big buck separated himself. With a wild and piercing yell, and with leaps like a kangaroo, the buck Indian, as all males are called—charged down upon Ellis, who seeing him coming, struggled partly to his feet with his back to the tree.

The face of the savage was terrible. Every line told of his thirst for the blood of the white man. Flourishing his tomahawk over his head the savage charged onward.

When within ten feet of Ellis he stopped.

With a yell of rage he hurled the tomahawk at the devoted and defenceless head of the white man.

Ellis saw the glancing light on the weapon as it came hurtling through the air at him.

He knew that fairly struck with it, his days were ended. Its sharp point would bite into his brain in a second.

Yet he never moved. The weapon came like the speed of the startled fawn directly at Ellis's head.

Then with incredible skill it turned, grazed his forehead, and buried itself in the tree, within half an inch of his temple.

Ellis never moved. His eyes looked straight at his foe. His face did not pale. He just stood at ease as if in command of his men at his far off post.

The Indians grunted their approbation.

"Brave man, heap brave man," said one dirty savage to another equally as dirty. "No fear there. He never dodge."

"He shows no fear at death by the tomahawk," sneered the voice of Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout, "but let us see if he will bear watching the fate that is in store for him finally."

As de Cruces spoke across from the tepees came a strange figure. It was that of Fordijway chief Medicine Man of the Cree nation.

He was a strange figure. From head to foot he wore a long deer-skin robe, dyed a brilliant red.

On his head was a white grinning skull. It was without question a human skull, of some enemy of the Crees killed either in battle, or tortured to death.

The face of the Medicine Man was painted a deep red, with long black lines of irregular spaces, painted sideways across the deep red background.

"He is painted for death," thought Ellis, "my time has come."

For a moment he bowed his head in silent prayer. Then he threw back his broad forehead which let his eyes be seen by all the crowd of Indians about him.

The braves had made a circle around him. The foreground was filled with the great heads of the Cree nation and the favored whites, and half-breeds. Next came the lesser personalities, until in the extreme rear were grouped the women of the tribe, several hundred it seemed to Ellis.

Not knowing exactly what was next to be his ordeal he watched the motley crew of ruffians carefully. Hope of rescue had died in his breast. His one idea was to die without a murmur of pain, or fear, so that no reproach could come to his memory.

"Die like a man, with my boots on," thought Ellis.

The Medicine Man was approaching.

He was howling some kind of a rude song.

The Indians answered him with equally fearsome howls.

The Medicine Man broke into a rude dance. His feet drummed the turf. He ran around in queer circles. His chest rose and fell.

Ellis knew enough of the Cree dialect to follow what the Medicine Man was saying. This is what the savage said:

"Dog of a pale face,

Cur of all curs,

You have stolen our land,

You have ravished our women,

You must die.

You must die by the torture appointed,

By the death of the spirit of evil.

You must die."

The words were sung over and over again. One by one the braves in the lines around him began singing the same words. They danced in the same uncouth way. It was a terrible sight for Ellis to watch.

The Dance of Death had begun.

It soon became wilder. Indian tom-toms were

beaten to give added noise to the air already surcharged with uncouth sounds. Shrill Indian whistles made of birch bark added to the din.

Women began to incite the warriors. One pretty maiden promised to marry the first brave that glutted his tomahawk in Ellis's blood.

Here and there a brave was seen to be foaming at the mouth. The Dance of Death was growing to be a frenzy, a riot of savage horror. Other braves began cutting great gashes in their own flesh in their excitement. Women rolled on the ground in hysteric fits.

While Ellis had heard of it he never had seen the Dance of Death before.

But intent on showing not one quiver of fear, Ellis forced himself to keep his eyes open. He stood smiling and gazing as if in profound pleasure and curiosity at the dreadful barbaric scene, in which savages lost all control of themselves and became as beasts of the forest.

With a final scream the Medicine Man dashed to where a cowering Indian boy sat. It was the poor creature condemned to death for putting an evil spirit into the bones of the wife of a chief.

A stoic to the last as all Indians are, the lad did not murmur. He rose and faced the Medicine Man, throwing off his robe as he did so, and standing a slight naked form, before the crazy tribe.

A long keen knife shone in the Medicine Man's hands.

It glittered a moment and then fell right upon the heart of the lad. With a sobbing cry the boy fell on his face dead.

The Indians jumped upon the prostrate corpse, and every man with a knife began hacking it. The corpse was disemboweled in a moment. It was hacked into a thousand bits under hundreds of knives. On many spears were seen hanging bits of flesh. A leg was borne aloft by a frenzied chief, an arm was flourished by a woman, old and shriveled.

"Good God!" said Ellis to himself, "for one moment with a revolver, and a knife against these devils."

As if in direct answer to his prayer, he heard the voice of "The Dawn."

"Quick!" she panted. "Here are your revolvers."

With a swoop of a knife she cut the bonds that held Ellis.

Then she vanished in the crowd.

Ellis gave two quick stamps. His blood began to circulate through his limbs.

Then he raised his heavy revolver.

Flash!

The shot struck the Medicine Man directly in the brain. Down he went as dead as the unfortunate youth he had just murdered.

"Retribution!" said Ellis between his set teeth.

Bang!

The revolver spoke again.

Down tumbled Great Bear, maimed for life. A bullet smashed his right leg bone.

"I owed you one for that capture of me," shouted Ellis forgetting that none would hear or understand him.

Then seeing that the Indians were about to charge him, with the speed of the wind he raced off toward the forest.

Behind him raced the entire pack of hell-hounds.

At the edge of the woods Ellis turned to send a

parting shot at the oncoming pack, and then rushed into the leafy glade followed by the Indians who with screams and cries of deadly hate, raced after him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLIGHT THROUGH THE WOODS.

Three paces from the clearing Frederick Ellis saw a form standing beneath a big tree.

With one motion he pulled his second huge revolver from his belt, and threw it up ready for a quick shot. His intention was to fire as he ran knowing that he only had a few hundred yards start of the howling pack of Indians, whites, and half-breeds.

Just as he was delivering his fire Ellis saw the figure advance one step with both hands above its head, the Indian sign of amity and friendship, with no hostile intent.

"Stop!"

In a moment Ellis recognized the voice of "The Dawn."

"Why are you here?" Ellis panted.

"To say just one word."

"Be quick."

"Proceed with great haste to the right. Do not try the block-house trail. The *renegade scout* has sent a party of Indians to head you off there."

"Well."

"Proceed by a detour to the East shore of Athabasca Lake. It is not two miles away."

"Yes."

"Remain in hiding until midnight tonight. When you hear our signal of the wail of the Rocky Mountain lion then you answer and come."

"Will it be you calling?"

"It will."

"Do you know anything about my friends in the block-house?"

"Hope for their safety."

"Why do you say that?"

"Hope is after all the only attribute of our life."

Through the woods resounded the yells of the Indians. They had reached the clearing's end and were about to plunge into the forest in their mad pursuit of Ellis.

Obedying a motion from "The Dawn" to keep to the right, with all his woodcraft at work to proceed in a noiseless manner, Ellis plunged far into the great leafy shelter to his right.

He heard "The Dawn" plunge with much noise to the left. The horde of savages heard the noise and with cries of triumph proceeded after the girl in exactly the opposite direction from where Ellis was speeding along to safety.

"Brave girl," thought Ellis. "Taking the fearful risk of discovery and then a terrible punishment for her perfidy. And doing it not for me, or for my party, but to keep her husband's love. Truly a wife is devotion itself to a man's interest."

Although not given to sentiment there came into Ellis's mind as he hurried onward a picture of beautiful Marion Elting. Her brown eyes, clear brunette complexion, her tall figure, her bravery under scenes that would crush most women, all whirled through Ellis's mind.

Then there came a picture that was fraught with much possibility.

"Marion Elting would do as much as 'The Dawn,' if not more to keep her husband's love. Well! Well!"

Shaking off these thoughts Ellis hurried forward, always forward. Every now and then he stopped to listen. No sound of pursuit reached his ears.

"That gang is so frenzied with the emotional *dance of death*," remarked Ellis, "that they have dropped all Indian craft. If a sober Indian, not a nerve wracked savage, had started to chase me, there would have been no sound for me to know that I was pursued. While I can move with speed, and with little noise in these woods, an Indian can move faster, and with less noise than I. Well, after all red gifts are not to be given white men, nor are the red men to have the white gifts naturally. You can't educate a white man to be an Indian, or an Indian to be a white man."

Ellis stopped at this point to listen.

All was silent save the roar of the breeze through the trees. It sounded like the tremendous beat of the surf upon a rocky shore having behind it the force of the great wind-swept ocean.

Early twilight had begun to fall. The distant trees were flecked with dying sun-light. Where Ellis stood the soft gray of twilight was stealing through the glade.

"It looks to me as if I must get my bearings," remarked Ellis. "I must be on the shores of Athabasca Lake at midnight. Just where the lake is, I am at a loss to know."

Again Ellis climbed to the upper branches of a gigantic tree. In the early evening haze he saw the wished for lake, shining like a long strip of burnished gold, under the rays of the setting sun, not a quarter of a mile away.

Ellis adjusted his pocket compass so that he would be able to reach the shores of the lake no matter how deep the surrounding darkness, and then began taking an account of "stock" as he called the search of his pockets to see what he had left within them.

"Nothing but this compass," he remarked dejectedly after every pocket was turned inside out. "I wouldn't have had that if it hadn't slipped down in the bottom of a pocket where the searchers did not find it."

Ellis looked at his weapons. The two revolvers and his Bowie knife was his entire armament.

"The Dawn" must have dropped that Bowie knife where I could wriggle to it," Ellis thought, "when she came to me when I was tied to that tree. Now why didn't she slip the knife to me instead of putting it where she did? That's Indian nature all right. Nothing is done openly and directly, man to man, or in this case woman to man, as we whites do. Well, Indians are Indians and whites, whites."

Ellis also wondered how the Indian girl had secured his Bowie Knife. He figured it out in his mind that when the Crees had learned of his ruse at the Buffalo wallow, they had also found the dead Chief with Ellis's knife buried in his savage heart. The body had been taken to the camp for burial in Cree Indian form, and the knife extracted from the corpse.

Probably de Cruces had claimed the knife and thus through her husband it had reached "The Dawn." She in turn had thought it poetic justice to return it to Ellis, but did it with the usual stealth of the red woman.

"Let me see, then," continued Ellis, "along somewhere in my inventory I must put this sore head of mine. It certainly aches so that it makes me dizzy. I think by the feel of it that my scalp is laid open and

that I got all told a pretty nasty welt. It's certainly painful."

Ellis climbed down from his airy perch. Then he went to a near by spring which he saw glittering in the woods and washed his wound. He tore a strip from his shirt and bound up the place.

"It will heal quickly without danger of infection in this clear air, but I will not have any hair there for some sleeps, as the Indians say. "As a barber that big brute Great Bear is all right," thought Ellis. "But he cuts hair too close."

When he looked at his revolvers Ellis gave a long low whistle.

"Five shots in one, two in the other—and not another blessed cartridge in my possession," he softly said. "If this isn't the limit, and then some more, and then again some."

Seven shots in two heavy Navy and Army revolvers after all, Ellis concluded, are better than no shots or revolvers at all, and so taking a long drink at the spring he shook himself and smiled in peace with all the world.

The fact that he was alone, without much means of protection, foodless in a country alive with red men thirsting for his blood, and had just escaped a terrible death by torture, seemed to in no way affect the remarkable man.

"I'm hungry," Ellis added to himself. "Hungry as a hunter, as the old story books used to say. But here I am up against the old problem. If I shoot I bring around me the Crees. If I don't shoot I starve."

After much cogitation he hit upon a plan to get food without shooting away his rare ammunition.

Ellis first made a little runway in a clear space, beneath a tree.

The runway began at a wide angle.

It then narrowed to a point.

It was made of brush which Ellis took from a tangled thicket of woods about fifty feet away. Great care was taken to make the point of the runway so that the wind blew away from it, not directly over it. This was so no scent of the white man would reach any game that might stray within the enclosure.

Ellis then carefully obliterated his tracks in the center of the runway by brushing every inch with a green bush. He took great care in only touching the stem of the bushes which he piled several feet high, making the entire trap look like a sylvan, natural bower.

"All is ready," thought Ellis. "Now, Mr. Game, come you here."

Ellis next secreted himself at the extreme end of the runway, thrusting his long arm out through the leafy bower, covered with a shrub. He could not see that directly any animal came within the enclosure that it would not see his hand, but that it would think the bush which had covered it was part of the forest.

"If any animal comes here and gets near my hand, I get my supper," remarked Ellis "and I don't have to shoot it either. I want rabbit, not black bear, because I would look pretty trying to catch a black bear with my hands."

Then Ellis settled himself to see how successful his plan would be. No statue sat stiller or more patiently than he. Seconds seemed hours to him, and minutes seemed days, but still he waited. A bird finally came

flying into the enclosure and perched upon a twig. It twittered and then burst into song.

Then hippity-hop-hippity-hop, along the wide mouth of the runway came timidly a brace of fine big Jack rabbits.

Ellis never stirred although his mouth watered when he saw the fine fat pair.

The rabbits were as large as kittens, two-thirds grown. They were gray in color with great ears that stretched up in the air, and gave them a queer look not unlike a donkey.

They were soon joined by a host of other rabbits. The place seemed to be alive with them.

Ellis sat tight. He did not move a muscle from his statue-like pose. At length his patience was rewarded. A big rabbit jumped upon his outstretched hand.

The hand closed on the startled animal. There was a faint squeak, but quicker than thought Ellis had grabbed the struggling creature by the neck, had pulled it through the underbrush screen, and had buried his knife in the animal's throat.

The remainder of the rabbits vanished with speed into the forest. But Ellis had his dinner and did not care.

In a trice Ellis skinned and cleaned the rabbit.

Then casting about he found a bit of perfectly dry wood from a half decayed tree near at hand. He hunted about for a moment until he found a long stick, also perfectly dry.

Placing the bit of wood in his left hand, and using the stick as a lever he whirled stick on wood with a peculiar quick steady motion. Soon a faint spark showed in the wood in his hand.

Satisfied that he could strike a light Indian fashion, Ellis secured a bit of soft dry moss, which he placed in the little natural cavern made in a great rock, but which was hardly three feet high, and two feet wide.

Then he supplied himself with plenty of dry wood. Green wood he knew smoked, dry wood does not. He was in no mind to tell the tree watchers of the Crees that he was cooking his dinner.

"If I know enough to shin up a tree to make observations," he remarked, "the Crees are equally as bright. They have a dozen young braves up various trees in hopes that I will be chump enough to bull things up by building a green wood fire, and thus let the smoke tell where I am."

Ellis next took off his jacket. This he placed about the dry moss. It thus sheltered the flame he was about to make. It also acted as a shield to pen in the smoke.

With a quick twist Ellis started the tiny spark. This in turn he flashed upon the dry moss. It caught quickly. Carefully feeding the flame with dry bits of wood, Ellis soon had a small but extremely hot fire.

"There," he said in a satisfied tone, as he pulled away his jacket, and spitted the rabbit on a great stake of hard wood, "we will now have our dinner on the gas range."

The odor of cooking rabbit soon filled the woods about Ellis. Its toothsome odor continued until in a short time the rabbit was thoroughly cooked.

Then Ellis stamped out his fire and knowing that he had made little blaze and hardly any smoke to apprise the savages of his whereabouts, he hurried onward for about a quarter of a mile carrying his cooked rabbit with him.

Then he sat him down and made a royal feast.

"If there's anything more satisfying to a hungry

man than plain Jack rabbit, without pepper or salt, with nothing but hunger for sauce I would like to know what it is."

Ellis finished his repast. He felt greatly strengthened. His wound ached yet, but he now was feeling a great reaction. He felt hope surge in his breast. "I guess 'The Dawn' was right," Ellis muttered, "hope is the greatest thing we whites have to sustain us. We hope for the morrow. We hope things will be better than they are. We hope for salvation. About all we do is hope."

Ruminating thus for some time, Ellis came back to life again with a jerk.

"It's pretty near midnight," he remarked. "I must hurry to the shores of Athabasca Lake. 'The Dawn' may be calling me any time."

Taking his course by his compass, Ellis plunged into the silent woods. As he did so he heard away off to the right the long, low wailing cry of the fierce Rocky Mountain lion.

"Is it 'The Dawn,' he thought, "or is it a real lion."

The quavering cry sounded again, lonesome and appalling.

"There was to be three cries, then an interval of silence, then two cries repeated," thought Ellis. "I will pause and listen."

He stopped and with all his senses listened.

The cry sounded again.

"Once," counted Ellis.

Again floated the moaning wail through the great dark forest.

"Twice," said Ellis.

A third time came the cry.

"Thrice," counted the listening man.

Then there was an interval of silence.

Then quickly following each other came the bleating baby-like pathetic cry again.

"It is she," laughed Ellis. "It is 'The Dawn.'"

Throwing back his head, deep throated, he repeated the wavering wailing sounds one more.

"The Dawn" crying now and then to get direction and being answered by Ellis soon stood before him.

"Welcome," said Ellis.

The girl bowed.

"You had no trouble in escaping from the Indians when you lured them away from me and after you?" said Ellis.

"No trouble, of course," replied the girl. "The Indians were too drunk with the emotions of the Dance of Death to know what they were doing. They chased me for a mile or more. I doubled on my tracks and got back to the camp again undetected."

"What is happening in the ranks of the Crees?"

"My husband, the renegade scout, has acceded to the wishes of Chief Piapet, and has dispatched half of our forces to the upper waters of the Athabasca River to try and kill any unwary hunter, or settler there. They have been ordered to make no prisoners. While they are slaughtering the enemy the remainder of the band are to try and capture the party guarding Marion Elting and Caroline Bennington. In the meantime they are searching for you."

"If your help continues they will have a merry hunt."

"It is not you or your friends that I am aiding. I care nothing for you or your friends. If it were any other Cree half-breed that designed to force Marion

Elting into an unholy marriage, I would aid the Cree and try to trap her for the Cree. But it is my husband that is trying to trap her, and I am supporting your cause, not for loyalty to you, but because I want my husband to share his love only with me."

"You are frank."

"Why should I not be? You are only a white man who have robbed my race ever since you came to our shores. I would like to have my husband succeed in all his plans except that about Marion Elting. I would glory in his killing you all, and if I thought he would forge his wishes to marry that white woman, I would be the first to aid him in capturing and torturing you all to death."

Ellis wondered at the Indian mind.

"But what of my friends?" he at length asked.

"The Dawn" told him rapidly of the events at the block-house. She did not know whether her advice to take the secret passage had been taken or not, or where Clifford Waring and his party were.

"All I can tell you is this," she concluded. "We are to meet here at midnight on the shores of this lake. Our signal is, the one that brought us together, I can do no more."

"How are we to escape when we meet, if we ever meet?" questioned Ellis.

"Follow me."

"The Dawn" led the way down a steep bluff to the sandy lake shore. Hidden within a leafy wooded spot that screened an arm of the lake she showed Ellis a large birch bark canoe.

A cry of joy rang out from Ellis when he saw the canoe.

"It will hold your entire party easily," he said. "It is built to sustain a War Party of five Crees, the usual number to start together on a slaughter raid. You can also carry what baggage you have."

Ellis jumped into the canoe, and taking one of its five paddles, at a touch propelled the frail craft far out into the lake.

To his further joy there lay in the canoe bottom his rifle, his two belts filled with cartridges. At length he was again armed and able to cope with his red foe at any odds. No longer was his revolver his only weapon backed by his Bowie knife.

In great glee Ellis hurried to the shore again to thank "The Dawn," for he well knew that the rifle and the cartridges had been placed there by the Indian girl.

But the girl had fled.

Afar at the right he heard her call again, quavering through the night.

"She is trying to get into communication with Waring," thought Ellis. "That big bundle aft in this canoe must be provisions. If I only can find Waring and his party we can paddle across the lake in this canoe, strike down the Athabasca River, travel by water for many miles, and then at the Great Buffalo bend of the river we will strike the Fort Edmonton trail again. It's only a day and night from the Great Buffalo Bend where the trail crosses to the Fort and safety."

With a long stroke of his paddle, Ellis sent the canoe hurtling along. He kept within fifty feet of the shore anon giving the signal cry of the Rocky Mountain.

Ever and anon he could hear from the shore the quavering reply of "The Dawn."

Suddenly in the darkness, Ellis saw a shape move along the shore. What was it? Was it the murderous

Creeds? He stopped his canoe with one flash of his paddle.

Then with rifle ready he stared into the grim darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

Clifford Waring was heart sick when he saw the terrible peril of his two beautiful charges in the cavern, far under ground in the heart of the great Athabasca range.

The terrible rattlesnake coiled to spring and dart his poisoned fangs into the soft flesh of Marion Elting, and Caroline Bennington, was like an awful dream to Waring. Yet his ready wit did not desert him.

His hand flew to his revolver holster.

He drew his weapon.

He had no time to take aim. But with a heartfelt prayer he fired right at the wide open jaws of the poised reptile just as it made its fearful spring upon the defenseless girls.

Crash!

The shot sounded in the narrow space of the cavern like the great roar of a car-load of dynamite. The two girls sank to their knees in the water of the creek. They were almost senseless from fright.

Waring dared not look up. He buried his face in his hands.

A yell of glee from Casey reassured him.

"Holy Saints!" yelled the Irishman, "And what do ye think o' the man. He has blown the head off that animal at fifty feet. What a shot? The greatest ever."

"A snake isn't an animal," put in Constable Bushwick.

"Don't you believe it," replied Casey as he rushed forward and with Constable Manning assisted in carrying the two frightened girls back to a rock in the center of the stream where they soon recovered from their fright. "Wasn't that snake as big as a cow just now before Waring shot it?"

"Sure it looked as big as a cow," replied Bushwick.

"Well, isn't a cow an animal?"

"Yes."

"Well, aren't you there? Wasn't I right in calling a snake an animal?"

Bushwick scratched his head. He was puzzled but felt that something was wrong.

But before he could open his mouth a cry from Waring was heard.

"Look! Look!" Waring yelled.

A strange sight, a horrible sight met all eyes.

There, hanging still by the rock around which it had bent its tail, was the dead headless snake. And around it, all along the shores, as if the shot had carried them from every hole and crevice in the rocky shore, were hundreds upon hundreds of deadly rattle-snakes. They wriggled and hissed in every direction. Red pointed tongues flashed. Beady eyes gleamed. Writhing shapes scuttled hither and thither.

Waring shuddered. The faces of his companions were pale. They had fought about everything on earth except the hideous rattle-snake, and here was a deadly army of them to be overcome.

Behind them surrounding the block-house were a horde of Indians, with their terrible half-breed and white allies; ahead in the only path they could possibly take were a host of horrible rattle-snakes.

"I'm going to the rear."

Constable Casey spoke these words.

"What for?" asked Waring in surprise.

"I'm scared green," replied the young Irishman.

"When I'm scared I like to join the rear guard and think it over."

This broke the spell. The party regained its wits. It began thinking of some way to drive the hideous snakes away and thus give them free thoroughfare along the subterraneous passage.

Even the two girls now thoroughly recovered, joined in the planning.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Caroline to Waring. Her eyes were soft as she looked at him. "What a wonderful shot. You saved my life. The snake would have struck me first."

Waring blushed through his tan.

He could not help thinking what a pretty girl Caroline Bennington was. She in turn seeing Waring blush changed color herself.

"What is the matter with you two children?" questioned Marion who had noticed the blushes of the pair.

Neither Waring or Caroline answered.

"Well of all the things I ever saw this is the strangest," rejoined Marion—"no it is not after all."

Then she laughed.

"But how about getting around these snakes?" she continued. "It's better to spare blushes a bit, but do not spare snakes."

The conference was continued.

Manning with his slow, but practical mind put in a word at this point.

"Why not all of us get near enough to the snakes to fire among them," he proposed, "the noise will scare them in their holes, and we will then make a dash to get by them. I don't suppose this infernal hole is all snakes, is it? There must be only a strata of the nasty things."

Accordingly Manning's plan was adopted.

Rifles and revolvers were drawn. The four men, and the two girls advanced to within easy shooting distance and all got ready to begin the attack.

"Fire!" yelled Waring.

The entire party turned loose each weapon.

The magazine rifles belched, and pounded, filling the air with ear splitting reberberations. The revolvers gave a shriller note. The small caliber weapons of Marion and Caroline spat fire, and were almost unheard under the heavier explosions of the rifles and big Colt revolvers.

Into the writhing mass of snakes went the hurtling mass of bullets. The reptiles died by hundreds. The air was fetid with the peculiar odor of the snakes. They darted hither and thither. They flashed their fangs into each other in their mad rage, finally attacking themselves and dying from their own poison.

It was an awe inspiring scene. One never to be forgotten.

"Cease firing."

Waring's voice gave the command which was heard through all the din.

All looked about when the noise had ceased. The cavern was filled with dense acrid gunpowder smoke. The party had difficulty in breathing. But the attack

had been successful. Not a single snake save the hundreds of dead ones could be seen anywhere. The remaining living portion of the great colony had wriggled into holes, or had sought unknown ways of reaching the surface of the earth.

"We are saved!" shouted Manning, greatly pleased with the success of his plan. "The way is clear."

"Forward march!" called Waring in high pleasure.

The party sprang forward. It skirted the hideous shore on which the dead snakes lay, Waring with his long rifle flinging the snake he had so cleverly shot into the depths of the creek.

"We can press forward now, I feel sure," Waring continued. He was right. The cavern again opened into a larger space. It contracted a little further on, to open again a moment later. The water in the creek grew shallower and shallower.

"That shows we are nearing the end of the creek," said Waring. "I suppose at the head waters of the creek we will find we are at Athabasca Lake."

"If we do," replied Marion, "we will see that the Indian girl told us the truth."

"We can depend on her further can we not?" questioned Caroline.

"Surely," replied Waring. "If we get out of this cavern to the shores of the lake we will be far on toward escape. Any way we can trust the Indian girl. Her story of the secret passageway is certainly correct."

Constable Bushwick remarked that in his opinion the cavern was a secret known to the Crees for years.

"I do not think so," replied Waring. "Had the Indians known of it they would have guarded it. We would never have gotten as far as we have. In my judgment 'The Dawn' or whatever she calls herself, knew of this through the whites. You know she lived at Fort Edmonton when her husband was one of our paid scouts until we learned of his treachery."

"Yes," rejoined Marion.

"In some unknown way she gathered news of this cavern. Then in her wish to help us she hurried to the block-house to tell us. She revealed the secret of the block-house and saved us from death. For if we had remained long in the block-house we would have starved if we did not surrender. If we had surrendered we all know our respective fates."

"But why did the Indian girl aid us?" asked Bushwick.

"The Lord alone knows," replied Waring. "It's lucky for us that she did aid us. We would be in greater peril than we are if we had not been helped by this Cree half-breed girl."

"My God bless her," said Marion. All, echoed the prayer.

The party continued along the creek bed. All could see that the creek was rising higher each step they took. At length they felt the cool breeze with the smell of earth, flowers, and trees blow upon them.

"The way is clear," Waring shouted in wild abandon. "Thank God! We are nearing the surface of the earth again."

All started forward at a brisk run.

Marion in the lead saw the glint of a gray ray upon a great stone over which was trickling a stream of pure clear water.

"Look! Look," she cried. "It's a stray moon-beam filtered through the rocks to cheer us."

"Hurrah!" cried the weary band.

Waring dashed ahead of the party. He saw that Marion was right. A great granite rock was there right before him.

It was the water of the creek which was tumbling over it in a beautiful cascade.

"Yes," said Waring, "this is the beginning of the creek. See? The waters are coming down from Lake Athabasca overhead. We are directly at the lake but I should say by the way that water is speeding that we are at least an hundred feet beneath the surface of the bottom of the earth."

Waring carefully examined the rock.

No where could he see a place through which his party could pass.

He gave a cry of despair.

"We have reached the shores of Lake Athabasca," he quavered, "but we are not able to go further. We are imprisoned in this infernal cavern."

Faces blanched when they heard Waring's words, in the sore beset party. Marion was the first one to regain courage.

"Why be daunted now?" she said, seeing that the men of the party could cope with any living foe, but sometimes faltered in the shadow of the unknown, "we must not scare at shadows. 'The faces of the living and the dead are but as pictures, which the eye of man alone fears as painted devils.' If you have faced all the terrors of this savage attack upon us, why falter now? There will be some way out for us all."

"And if there is not we can die bravely here as well as with the ringing shouts of savages on the surface of the earth the last thing we heard," put in Caroline.

"Boys, the girls are right," said Waring. "What's next?"

"My stomach suggests something to eat?" dryly said Constable Casey. "Me breakfast was a dream. I lunched on water, not anything fillin' about water. And now it's hot air you are giving me for my dinner."

"Is there anything left to eat?" asked Waring.

"There's enough smoked antelope to give us a meal," replied Bushwick.

"How in thunder did you get smoked antelope?" questioned Waring.

"Well after we had put out that oil fire in the ditch about the block-house," continued Bushwick, "at least so far as stopping the fire from burning the block-house I couldn't for the life of me stop thinking what a fine way it would be to use those flames set by the enemy to 'jerk' (smoke) the antelope so we could carry it with us. You know the Indian way of smoking meat till it is hard and will keep for ever. So I just dug up the antelope from the cache, and hustled out of the block-house, laid the meat where it would get a good smoking, and when it was finished cached it again. Then when we started on this little jaunt I had some jerked antelope ready for you."

"You are the pearl of constables," said Waring. "We will now have some dinner."

The feast was by no means a poor one to the half famished party.

"Jerked antelope meat, and cold spring water isn't so bad at that," Waring remarked.

"I think it remarkably good," replied Marion, "it has such a fine smoky flavor."

"A pound of that meat will sustain life for many hours," put in Constable Bushwick.

"With ten pounds of antelope meat I have traveled a hundred and fifty long miles," remarked Casey.

"While we are resting and before we begin our search can you not tell me something about the North-western Mounted Police."

"There isn't much to tell," said Constable Casey. "We were organized in 1874 when we were only 274 men strong. We were given this motto then, 'Our First Duty Is To Die.'"

"That means?" queried Marion.

"We must never think of ourselves."

"Since the early organization of the force it has grown and grown to its present almost army-like size" put in Waring. "We have our headquarters at Regina, the little raw unfinished capitol of the North-west prairies. That city, you know, is about a hundred miles due north from the border line of Montana and North Dakota, the American states. We are divided into eight districts. Each has divisional headquarters in the largest hamlets in each district, and from these districts control reaches out into tremendous allotments of territory. One man usually has thousands of miles to cover. He lives among savages, hostile and hating him. The whiskey smuggler is all around him. Men who are so wicked that they cannot live—even in the few rough border towns hereabouts are seeking for his blood, for he is all there is of the law in all this great country."

"A life of great adventure always for a real man," snapped in Caroline, her pretty face glowing with feeling.

Waring gave her an admiring glance.

"That is all there is to our life," he added. "It's one of continual danger. We enlist for five years. We are always in these five years, in danger of sudden death. One of our number wrote the song we all sing so often. It truly sets forth our lives and deaths."

Casey jumped up his eyes ablaze.

"We drown in unknown waters, we burn with forest flame," he cried, "but boys, better this life than a dog's death in a bed. When my time comes let me go to the tune of the rifles crack and the hum of the bullet, in the open, face to the foe like a man should die."

"That's all very well," drawled Constable Manning, "but how about starving to death in a bally hole under a cursed lake. Will that fate suit your high heroicism?"

Casey came to earth with a thud.

"Not any starvation route for me," he jested. "I get me busy, right now, and if I don't find a way by that rock I will go and eat the rock."

Accordingly all the party began the work of searching for the way to the upper world. They were encouraged by Marion who asserted with a show of reason, that as they had found the way into the cavern after a baffling search there certainly must be a way out, if it could only be discovered.

They all searched every possible crevice, for the secret of the way out. Hands were torn by rock, and dirt, but still the party found no clew to the secret.

"I guess it's no go," remarked Waring, dejectedly. "We are trapped in this tomb. We must die here."

He leaned heavily upon the rock as he spoke. His mind was torn by conflicting emotions.

Marion drew near to console Waring.

Then a remarkable thing happened. Waring gave a great cry of wonderment. There was a trembling of the giant rock. It tottered on its base and sliding

away with a thunderous roar, left a great hole into which Waring disappeared.

So quick came the noise of the moving rock, so suddenly did Waring fall from view that the entire party stood transfixed with amazement.

"My God!" cried Caroline, "Mr. Waring is dead."

She sank fainting to the earth.

"Nonsense," sharply said Marion. "Do not be sure that Waring is dead until some one has investigated."

Constable Manning sprang forward at the words. He was about to jump into the deep hole where the rock had stood when a head appeared above the surface of the earth. All started. Yes, it was the head of Waring.

"Are you dead?" asked Casey.

"What a fool question," snapped Waring. "If I was dead do you suppose I would be standing here in this infernal hole with my nose bleeding?"

"W-h-y how did your nose get to bleeding?" questioned Manning who was a true Britisher and did not see the point quickly.

"Oh, it always bleeds this way every day," yelled Waring. "I do this stunt every afternoon at 4 P. M. It's a common thing for a bally rock to slide out from under me and let me down in a beastly hole ten to fifteen feet deep. If my head was as thick as yours, Manning, I would fall on it and break the rock with it. As it is, I happened to land on my nose, hence it's bleeding."

In spite of herself Marion burst into merry laughter. The entire party including Waring soon joined in her laughter. It cleared the atmosphere.

Waring was fished out of his hole, and soon was patched up. His face was scratched, his nose besides was bleeding, and he was sore and stiff from his head-foremost dive into the earth, but otherwise he was unhurt and he soon regained his spirits and after some pine knots had been lighted, he began the exploration of the hole.

"This way out," he shouted at length. "All right, boys and girls. We have stumbled on the secret way of getting out of the cavern. Here I see a pair of steps leading evidently up to the surface of good old Mother Earth."

Every one became vastly excited.

While Manning helped Marion down into the hole, Casey gallantly aided Caroline. The other men of the party jumped hastily into the excavation and soon the entire weary expedition was climbing up a steep flight of stone steps. Waring led as usual.

The higher they climbed the more they knew they were on the right way. The scent of the earth came to them. They could feel stronger and stronger the breath of the night breeze that rises after the sun goes down. Their ears heard the sough-sough of wind through the great forest. The ripple of water on the shores of Lake Athabasca reached them.

"Hurrah!" cried Waring in a subdued tone for he had not forgotten the dangers of Indians as soon as they began to get toward the surface of the earth, "Here we are."

As he spoke he burst through a little clump of shrubbery that hid the entrance to the great Athabasca cavern, and sore, weary, but happy tore his way into the darkness of night, which was, however, shot by the light of an early moon, and sank down upon the shores of the lake he had so wished to gain, beautiful Athabasca.

Behind him hurried all the party of men and women.

"Saved," said Marion.

"Saved," echoed Caroline.

"Hurrah," cried the constables.

In the midst of their congratulations of each other came a sudden sharp noise.

Click! Click!

Waring knew in a moment that it was the noise made by the cocking of a rifle. In turn he sprang to his weapon. What had caused the alarm.

"There! Look!" whispered Marion. "See. Right out there in the lake. There is a boat and a man in it. Shoot low."

Involuntarily she had raised her voice. It rang out clear and strong.

Waring raised his rifle to his shoulder. He took steady aim at the huge bulk in the water. There must be no mistake in the shot. It must kill or all their lives were sacrificed.

Waring's hand pressed the trigger.

CHAPTER IX.

"NOW THEN, SHOULDER TO SHOULDER."

"Hold your fire."

The command came to the ears of Waring. He had nearly sped his rifle's bullet in the direction of the shape in the lake.

It stopped the motion that would have sped death. Waring heeded the command, for so much of a soldier was he, that the very motion of pressing the trigger was halted by the imperious voice that hailed him from the lake.

"Who are you that commands me not to fire?" raged Waring the next moment still holding his weapon at his face ready to fire if necessary.

"Fred Ellis, your superior officer," rang out the voice from the lake. "You idiot, don't you know my voice?"

Waring, caring not for hostile Indians, yelled in wide amazement:

"Is it really you, Fred," he said. "Come ashore quick. We are crazy to greet you, old chap."

In two strokes of the paddle, Ellis was ashore. What a greeting was his. Marion, her face wreathed in smiles and blushes wrung the hand of Ellis as if she could never let go. Caroline hung on the other hand in equal fervor.

The men of the party clapped him on the back and laughed and danced like madmen.

Ellis was the first to regain his senses. He told the party to be careful for they were making noise enough to bring down upon them the Crees, if any happened to be lurking directly about them, and from what he knew of the situation he was aware of the fact that the pursuit was by no means given up.

"If we are not careful we will be captured yet," he said, "as long as Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout, is alive we will be in danger of death and torture."

Waring's face grew dark.

"Jules de Cruces must die," he hissed. "Not one of us must spare him when we get him in our power."

"But he may get us before we get him," cried Ellis. "So far he has made more trouble for us than we for him. I hate to feel that so many tricks are his. I hate to be 'tricked by a renegade scout.'"

"And I as surely hate to be 'trapped by the Crees,' as we certainly have been several times, since we first were attacked by those bloody savages," put in Waring.

"Let us be wily ourselves," interjected Constable Casey. "One wild Irishman like myself, who was born on the 'owld sod' ought to have brains enough to make rings around a half-breed like de Cruces, and his murtherin' gang of whites, Crees and half-breeds."

"I fancy that we shall have a bloody reckoning yet," replied Ellis calmly. "The battle is not yet over."

"I have a score to pay yet," remarked Waring.

"And so have I," replied Ellis.

"And I," put in Constable Casey.

"We too," rejoined Constables Bushwick and Manning.

"To say nothing of our feelings in the matter," remarked Marion.

Caroline hung her head and blushed.

"Well, it seems to me that our friend de Cruces had the gentle art of making enemies down fine," added Ellis. "I think with all our brave band of heroes against him, we must feel that we will win the game yet."

"We will," cried the entire party.

Ellis was then questioned as to all that had befallen him. He told his story quickly. All marveled at his escape.

In turn, Waring told of the manner in which they escaped from the block-house. It was a thrilling story, Ellis was thunderstruck.

"It doesn't seem possible," he said. "If I had read it in a book I would not have believed it. But it certainly is true for here we all are, and we each have lived through the awful ordeals," he said.

"What next?" questioned Waring. "You are again in command of us, you know, Fred."

"I think we had better await the signal from 'The Dawn' the Indian girl."

"Have you met her also?"

"Of course."

"Tell us about it."

Waring listened while Ellis told of his meetings with "The Dawn," how she had saved his life, and then he in turn told Ellis of what the Indian girl had done for his party, while Ellis was fighting to give it time to escape to the block-house.

"She is a wonderful girl," said Ellis finally. "We each have the same signal ready for us to heed. We will await the cry of the Rocky Mountain lion."

The party had not long to await the signal.

It came almost at their feet. The long drawn plaintive notes had hardly been answered before "The Dawn" stood before the party.

"I am here," she said, "but you must make haste."

"Why?"

"Because right behind me comes de Cruces with a large party of braves."

"Well."

"They know that you have escaped from the block-house."

"How so?"

"I do not know. I only know that my husband, de Cruces came to our tepee last night mad with rage. He said that you, Waring, and the women here, had made their escape from the block-house, but how, he said he did not know. He knew that you were trying to get to Athabasca Lake."

"Yes," said Ellis.

"And he knew also that you, Inspector Ellis had escaped," added "The Dawn."

"How?"

"I don't know that either," replied the girl. "I only know that you are in danger as well as I, every moment you remain here. I want you to make your escape at once."

"What do you advise?" questioned Ellis.

"Take to your canoe," replied the Indian girl. "I have provisioned it secretly for a week ahead. Hurry across Athabasca Lake to the head waters of Athabasca River. Start down the river as fast as you can. You ought to get across the lake and well down the river before de Cruces and the Crees can chase you around it. It's only ten miles by water to the river, and twenty-five by land."

"Has not de Cruces cut off our escape at the river by sending a band of Crees there?" asked Waring.

"That I do not know. You must run your risk in that direction. It is your only chance for escape. The wild-wood is alive with Crees all the way on the Athabasca trail; de Cruces told me that in one day more than a hundred whites had been killed by his bands. He says that the Rebellion is succeeding and that there is now only your little party of whites alive except the force at Fort Edmonton, and he expects, he says, after he has killed your party, and married Marion Elting, to march to Fort Edmonton itself and storm that. He says he will put every man and woman and child to the sword in the Fort, and will then fortify this country so that British rule will be over forever here."

"He will be killed some day for this awful rebellion," snapped Waring.

"I do not think so," rejoined "The Dawn." "He has his plans too well laid. Ottawa was never met with a rebellion like this before. It can never be put down."

Ellis laughed.

"Ottawa will not be asked to quell the rebellion," he said. "I am going to quell it myself."

"How?"

"That is yet to be shown you," came the answer.

"A good soldier does not tell his plans in advance. A wily American politician once said, 'I don't hunt ducks with a brass band.'"

"But you waste time," urged the Indian girl. "Get you gone ere it is too late."

Waring led the way silently to the waiting canoe.

Marion and Ellis waited until all had gone save themselves. Then they turned to the Indian girl.

"Shall we ever meet again?" asked Marion.

"I do not think so," replied "The Dawn." "If now you can not save yourselves, I can do no more. The way is clear across Athabasca Lake. You ought to find no trouble in going down the river. Anyway, hereafter, I can not aid you; my power is over."

"May we thank you," timidly asked Marion knowing that any substantial reward would be refused by the proud spirited Indian.

"Girl," answered "The Dawn", "I ask no thanks. If it were not that my husband fancied your pretty face and wanted to wed you, I would not have cared whether you lived or died. You need not thank me. If I had my own way you would be gracing the wigwam of some Cree brave and every one of your companions would be put to the torture. I have only aided

you to keep you away from my husband—you owe me no thanks."

Marion blushed deeply.

"Yet after all," she said, "I am going to thank you, and to say 'God reward you for trying to preserve me from such an awful fate as you picture.'"

"And may I say to you," replied "The Dawn," "that I hope the Great Spirit which rules over us all, white or red will hold you safe from my husband, if not from harm. Now go your way."

Ellis knew well that thanks from him would be superfluous. He did not try to add his to the good wishes of Marion. But he turned and drawing Marion with him hurried to the canoe.

Immediately all had embarked.

Manning quickly looked through the package in the rear of the frail craft, and announced that the Indian girl had provided plenty of provisions for a week at least ahead.

"And here's a great supply of cartridges," Manning joyfully added. "We can fight for a long time now."

Ellis pointed out to Marion that it was a strange nature that would cause the Indian girl to provide the whites with bullets to kill her own people with.

"I do not know," replied Marion. "It's hard to justify the course of the Indian girl, but after all she was fighting for her husband's love. Not anything else was worth while to her. Her kinsmen might all die but she must retain her husband, was her view point."

"After all," put in Waring, "Indian nature is impossible for we whites to understand."

The men, taking turns in paddling the frail birch-bark canoe meanwhile proceeded at utmost speed to the head of the lake where the Athabasca River began and which they hoped would lead them to safety.

"It is our last and only chance," Ellis exclaimed as he swept the depths of the clear, cold lake with his paddle, ably seconded by Manning on the other side of the canoe.

The work was laid out into relays of two men, the fifth steering with the paddle.

The journey was a dangerous one. Five people in a birch-bark canoe in the middle of a lake made slow progress even under the great strength of Ellis and Manning, who first essayed together, the work of acting as a propelling force.

The canoe had been built for still waters and it was perilous in the extreme venturing in the center of the lake.

"I hope that the wind will not kick up many higher waves than we are facing now," muttered Ellis to Waring. "This canoe is about as heavily loaded as she will stand. Heavier waves will make us capsized."

"As for me, if I've got to die," rejoined Waring "I would just as leave die by drowning as shooting. Any way, it's our only chance for an escape."

"God grant the Crees have not got to the mouth of the Athabasca River before us," replied Ellis.

The party had many an exciting experience on the trip to the river's mouth.

Often the canoe was almost swamped by a giant wave. Again all hands had to bail out water that had dashed into their frail craft as a great wave struck them. At another moment, time was lost in running before the wind to keep from being swamped by a cross sea coming from a jutting point of land.

Hours thus passed.

The entire party wet to the skin, was becoming thoroughly exhausted, when at length they saw the dim outline of the upper end of the lake peer out of the foam and mist in which they were drifting.

"Land ho!" cried Waring who was steering the canoe by his paddle from a seat aft, while Casey and Manning at this time were wielding the propelling paddles.

Ellis who was assisting Marion and Caroline in bailing out the craft, gave a great shout when he heard Waring's news.

"It's lucky," he added in a whisper to Marion, "we could not have held out much longer."

"There is one thing I wish to ask you, Mr. Ellis," hurriedly put in Marion.

"Yes. What is it?"

"How did you know that it was our party on the bank of this lake, when Mr. Waring was about to fire on you?"

"Why I knew your voice" said Ellis, with a bewildered air.

Marion did not reply. But she smiled as if the answer was sufficient.

"Steer for that point of woods," ordered Ellis of Waring in the next breath. "You can round it and come to anchor in the lee of the land where this fearful cutting cross sea will not swamp us."

Waring nodded.

He bent his course as near the shore and still water as possible. But he feared to get very near shore not knowing when a shot might ring out from some ambushed savage's rifle.

Bowing, nodding, trembling as if it could no longer keep afloat the gallant little canoe at length shot by the point of land indicated by Ellis and under a gigantic stroke of the two paddlemen, swerved, turned almost a complete circle, and stopped as Waring dropped over its anchor, which hurried quickly to the lake bottom.

Ellis, rifle over shoulder plunged quickly overboard. The water came up to his waist. He hurried ashore, and quickly examined the lay of the land.

"We are in a good position," he said as he returned to the canoe. "But we must still hurry. Run ashore, Cliff, and the girls had better get us something to eat quickly. Look over the canoe. See that it is staunch. Examine the provisions for we have not much time to take here. We know the Crees are in pursuit and we must make the river as fast we can."

Marion and Caroline had extreme difficulty in standing for several moments after getting out of the frail craft. Their limbs were cramped by sitting in such a constrained position. They had hardly dared to move for hours.

At length they recovered and began to make ready quite a substantial repast. Ellis kindled a fire in Indian fashion, and soon coffee gave its appetizing odor from the tiny fire.

"The Dawn" had given much assortment to the provisions she had provided and Casey remarked that, "Indians lived very well," as he put the best part of a great sage hen into his mouth.

"Here is some bear meat that is very good," said Manning.

"A little Indian bread here if you please," said Casey.

"I'd like a bit of antelope, cold," rejoined Ellis, but all were in fine shape for the meal, having fasted longer than they cared to own.

The meal finished every one in the party felt more encouraged.

"It beats all how brave one feels when one has had a good dinner," Constable Case remarked. "I could fight an Indian right now."

"I could fight three," rejoined Bushwick.

"You can each have your wish soon," grimly answered Ellis pointing far out toward the center of the lake. "I just saw the flash of a paddle. The enemy are coming after us in force."

"We had better take to the canoe and hurry into the river," counseled Waring.

"Too late," replied Ellis. "We have made a serious mistake in stopping here as we have done—but I don't know. We could have gone the pace no longer. We had to have food and rest."

"How long before the enemy can be upon us?" questioned Marion.

"Half an hour, I should say," replied Ellis.

"Have they seen us?"

"I do not think so. They are struggling in the trough of the waves in the center of the lake. We are high on land on this bluff-like point. We could see them. They could not see us."

"Can we not devise some way of escape?"

"I am trying to think of a way," replied Ellis. "From the lay of the land here there may be a way out."

Ellis walked back and forth deep in thought for some time. Then he told his plan.

With infinite care he first obliterated all signs of the fire he and his companions had built. Great detail was followed next

in removing all traces of the landing. Then every person got aboard the canoe again, taking pains to leave no tell-tale marks of the embarkation along the shore.

"My plan is this," explained Ellis as he paddled stoutly toward the shores of the inner bay. "We must try to gain time for the night to come. We can not with our large party in this over-weighted canoe, expect to escape a half dozen canoes, each lightly weighted with War Parties of Crees. Jules de Cruces is undoubtedly leading the party out in the lake. He is too good a scout not to provide enough canoes for his party. This is shown by the fact that although behind us some hours, he has crossed the lake in quicker time than we have."

"Well, get to your plan," put in Waring.

"I am going to hide if I can."

"You will have a fine chance of hiding five great men, and two strong young women," jeered Waring.

"Possibly," calmly rejoined Ellis, "but you take orders here. I am going to do the planning."

Thoroughly squelched Waring said no more.

Ellis with swift strokes finally sent the canoe along shore of the lake to a point where the woods came down directly to the water, leaving a sort of canopy in its wake that hung over the water in primeval profusion.

Under this canopy Ellis directed the canoe. He anchored it where the green bushes, and the underbrush made a roof of vernal beauty. The canoe was hidden effectually from all view taken from the main-land.

"No one can see us here and thus inaugurate a shore attack," explained Ellis. "Now Waring you secure the canoe firmly to the bank. It must not rock the canopy above it, mind you, no matter how great or fierce are the waves in the lake. I will be back in a moment."

Ellis jumped overboard into water that came up just beneath his shoulders. He quickly waded away, and soon was in deep water. He swam to a point about a quarter of a mile distant. Then he landed and vanished into the woods.

Soon he returned bearing a great pile of bushes and young trees on his back. He pushed them ahead of him into the water, and by wading and swimming reached the canoe again.

"Now all hands help me," Ellis ordered as he began to drape the leafy bushes around the lake side of the canoe.

The entire party now saw Ellis wished to bulwark his canoe against the vision of the oncoming savages in the lake by building a leafy bower about it.

"Great scheme," yelled Waring. He began aiding in the work. All fell to with great enthusiasm. In a quick space of time the canoe was hidden from view.

Ellis waded out to quite some distance lakeward. There he viewed with critical eye the result of his plan.

Then he swam, and waded back to the canoe, splashing along like some great water dog.

"It's fine," he said to the anxious party. "It's just fine. I don't think that even a Cree eye can penetrate that bower. From lake or shore it looks exactly like the forest. No one would ever dream that the canoe was secreted there. It's fine."

The sound of paddles came upon the air.

"Hush," whispered Waring, "Here they come."

CHAPTER X.

A DESPERATE DASH FOR LIFE.

Around the point of land they had so shortly before threaded, came a canoe in which sat two Indians and a white man.

The white man was Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout, his face dark with wrath, and his eyes gazing gloomily here and there as if in search of his prey.

Clifford Waring raised his rifle as if to take aim.

Ellis grasped his friend's weapon and with a look quelled his anger.

Yet Ellis himself was as angry as was Waring. The fact that they had the man who was leading Rebellion throughout the land, was anxious to bring to his evil arms one of the wards of the Mounted Police, right in his power, where a single rifle shot would end all the turmoil, was a powerful appeal to Ellis to fire the shot.

On the other hand he knew that if he did he would probably sacrifice his party. He well knew that de Cruces, haughty, proud, revengeful as he sat in the canoe and ordered his crew of Crees to their utmost speed, was too able a commander to hurl him-

self and two Indians against the five undaunted white men he was pursuing.

"There are other canoes with him," whispered Ellis to Waring. "You must not shoot. Wait. We will all get our revenge."

Ellis spoke truly. Right behind the canoe bearing Cruces came in turn a second frail craft, bearing three naked, painted Crees. Each wore about his waist a loin cloth, but nothing else. It was the usual mode of the Crees in crossing a dangerous body of water in a canoe. If the craft tipped over the crew thus, was not weighted down with robes of deerskin.

The great muscles of the Crees were seen to rise and fall so anxious were they to make great speed. Their arms looked like whip-cord. Their vast chests rose and fell with the stress of their efforts. The canoe fairly leaped through the surging water.

"Sit tight," commanded Ellis when the leading canoe was abreast of him. "Look! There are seven canoes each behind the other."

"Yes, in cursed Indian file," replied Waring, "Three in each canoe—with de Cruces and this fellow abreast of us that makes 27 of the enemy, and five among us here."

"Make us six," interjected Marion, "Caroline and I can shoot. We ought to at least measure up as good as one man."

"The suffragettes think you two women measure up better than seven men," rejoined Ellis. "And I guess you do at that. You are as brave as we are, and bear your ills far better than we mere men."

"Thank you," replied both girls. They had reached the point where awful danger no longer appalled. That is the way of this world. Men and women soon adjust themselves to new conditions even if the condition is one of constant danger. In the terrific struggle of the past ten days the entire party had faced death so often, that they feared its terrors no more; death was now a daily jest with them all.

The anxious watchers in the canoe saw as if a painted picture had been swiftly drawn before their eyes and then had vanished, the Indians in their canoes hurry at great speed in the direction of the river.

They could hear the loud curses with which the *renegade scout* urged on his men. They saw that he was foaming with passion.

"Keep still," counseled Ellis. "There is no danger."

As he spoke the leafy bower about him was suddenly torn asunder and with a curse deep, but not loud, Jules de Cruces hurled himself into the canoe. De Cruces had penetrated to their hiding place. Hate sharpens the wits.

"I have you all at last," he hissed.

Ellis jumped straight from the canoe to the land, bearing with him the form of the half-breed, the *renegade scout*.

How he did it he wondered as he accomplished the feat. To jump from a canoe grasp a strong, burly man by the throat, and lift him right backward when the fellow was in full career forward, was a great show of wondrous strength. But the rage of Ellis was superhuman. He knew he fought not only for life, but for the happiness of two women, left in his charge. His was the strength of ten men.

The *renegade scout* met the attack bravely. Borne down at first by the sudden and awful attack of Ellis, he fell to his knees, but struggled to his feet a second later and grasped Ellis by the waist.

Round and round the two men spun, each trying to take advantage of every bit of strength left in his body. Their lungs strained. They groaned in agony of achievement.

The Indians in the other canoes tried hard to gain the shore. They rushed through the water in their mad endeavor.

Into the open jumped Waring followed by all the party.

"Do not let the Crees land," shouted Waring. "Ellis can look out after that big brute easily."

The rifle of Waring spoke as he yelled the words. A Cree dropped his paddle and went overboard badly injured to drown quickly in the lake water.

Flash! Manning's weapon disabled another Indian. Casey, Bushwick, Marion, Caroline, all sent a storm of bullets at the approaching savages.

Nothing could withstand the fearful storm of lead thus rained upon the foe.

The canoes seemed to crumple up, turn, drift away, and with frightened cries the Indians paddled out of harm's way.

Meanwhile Ellis and the *renegade scout* had been wrestling, striking, like demons at each other. Neither could draw a weapon. Their clutches upon each other were too close.

"I have you now, man to man," gasped Ellis as he made a terrible effort and threw his foe to the ground.

"Not yet," cried the *renegade scout*. He drew his knees up nearly to his chin. His feet caught Ellis full upon his chest.

With one long leopard-like spring the *renegade scout* thrust out his legs with all his force.

Nothing alive could withstand the effort. Ellis found his hold breaking from the neck of his enemy. He felt himself hurled backward. Then de Cruces jumped to his feet. He drew his Bowie knife from his belt. He dashed at Ellis.

"My God, he will kill him," Ellis heard Marion's voice.

It seemed to make steel of his muscles. He saw his friends dart forward to aid him in his battle.

"Back," Ellis shouted, "this is between de Cruces and I alone."

His knife flashed from his belt as he spoke. Each man was now equally armed.

They came together with a crash. The steel of de Cruces' bit deep in Ellis's arm. In turn he lunged. A deep line of red showed upon the face of the *renegade scout*. The recreant's body was soon red with blood.

So the two powerful men fought. No one dared interfere. A dozen times did Waring raise his rifle to shoot. He dared not lest he kill his friend.

De Cruces tried to reach his revolver, but he was so hotly pressed that he could not. The sun went down into the lake blood-red in color. Around the fighters the ground looked like a shamble. Marion and Caroline were sobbing in agony of fear and apprehension.

At length Ellis lurched forward. De Cruces caught him by the throat as his foot slipped. Ellis clutched at his enemy's throat in turn and both men went to the ground.

As they fell Ellis was on top. His leg pressed into his enemy's side.

One hand grasped the wrist of de Cruces. In the hand of the half-breed was held the keen Bowie knife.

Ellis grasped that hand. With all his strength he bore down on it. He saw red. The world seemed to have turned into a terrible great red ball with everything covered by blood.

Still Ellis clung to the knife which de Cruces held in his outstretched hand.

Slowly Ellis pulled the knife downward. De Cruces saw his endeavor. He knew that if Ellis could not stop the downward pressure of his enemy's hand that Ellis would thrust his own knife into his coward throat.

Ellis pressed steadily downward. Slowly the weapon sank, nearer, and nearer to de Cruces' throat. Fear at length was seen creeping into de Cruces' eyes.

With a great shout of triumph Ellis thrust the weapon downward. Its keen length ran to the hilt in de Cruces' throat. The stricken ruffian drummed with his heels upon the sod. His eyes turned horribly in his head. A gush of deep red blood bathed Ellis' face in carmine.

Ellis felt the arms of de Cruces relax from about him. Ellis jumped up. His foe lay dead before him.

By the downward thrust of his own Bowie knife Jules de Cruces, the *renegade scout* had died, and with his death passed away his great Rebellion.

Inspector Frederick Ellis had kept his word. He had alone, unaided, quelled the great Rebellion, so far as its plotting head was concerned.

There was now only the Indians to face.

CHAPTER XI.

FRED ELLIS AT THE HELM.

Wounded, bruised, panting for breath, Inspector Frederick Ellis was the first to recover his wits.

"Leave the cur half-breed for his Indian allies to bury," he commanded, as he rushed to the canoe. "We must escape now or never."

His party ran after him for dear life. They were soon aboard and had pushed out into the lake.

"Paddle like mad," yelled Warring. Every bit of speed possible was put upon the frail canoe.

Marion and Caroline meanwhile bound up the wounds of Ellis. He was cut and very badly bruised all over his body. Some of the wounds needed immediate surgical aid but none could be given other than staunching the flow of blood as quickly as possible.

Marion hardly dared look at Ellis as the canoe sped along. He had shown her a new phase of his character. Such a horrible battle she had never dreamed could have been fought by any two men. Yet, she appreciated what it meant to Ellis. She knew he had been forced in the line of his duty to kill de Cruces,

but her heart was heavy when she thought of the sorrow of "The Dawn" when the news was brought to her of her husband's death.

"No matter how big a brute a man may be," Marion thought, "some poor woman will mourn his death."

But all thoughts of this kind gave way a moment later when she saw that the Crees were pursuing the flying canoe in which she sat. The Indians had recovered from their panic stricken retreat. Their horrid war cry rang over the dancing waters of the lake.

"Here we are at our last ditch," Ellis remarked after taking a long look at the Crees. "Hear their death song? They know that the *renegade scout* is dead. They are flying after us for revenge. No one of us is safe from death now. They will shoot to kill."

This was evident immediately. The surface of the water was seen to be cut with the bullets of the Indians. They fired low, and with evident intent to kill all in the canoe.

"With this sea on," Waring remarked, "they can get no range or direction and can not do much damage."

He had hardly spoken when there came the queer sound of a sort of slap; as if a hand had smartly hit an arm.

With the sound Waring leaped up, and then sank back with his right hand pressed tightly against his shoulder.

"I'm hit," he said. "I guess they have our range all right."

Caroline and Manning rushed forward as fast as they could in the unsteady and cranky craft, and bound up the wound as well as possible. A blue black hole directly through the shoulder showed where the Cree bullet had ploughed.

"It's a clean hole," said Waring who pluckily watched his nurses try to staunch the pouring blood, "but it's anyway gone clear through. I feel the bullet on the back of my shoulder."

The bullet was thus found and was quickly extracted. Waring and all the others in the canoe save the toiling paddle-men were directed by Ellis to lie down in the bottom of the canoe, to give as little chance for the Crees to get the range from the forms in the canoe, as possible.

Still the bullets whistled over the heads of the devoted little band of white people.

"I am afraid this is our last fight, Fred," whispered Waring.

"Looks that way, doesn't it," rejoined Ellis, "But if we can make the Athabasca River we may get away. Out here in the lake we present too much of a surface for the infernal Crees to shoot at. If the waves were not so high we would have been riddled long ago. They can shoot straight when we are tossing about that way. How's your shoulder?"

"Infernally painful."

"Lucky man. You might be beyond all pain now, had that shot hit your head."

"Nonsense," put in Constable Casey, "if Waring had been hit in the head the shot wouldn't have hurt; it would have simply bounded off."

"Shut up, you wild Irishman," remarked Bushwick, "you are so soft like a jelly fish that if the bullet had hit you, why it wouldn't have found anything to hit."

"Who's Irish now," laughed Casey as Bushwick spoke.

"What men," whispered Marion to Caroline. "They know we have hardly a chance of escape yet they make a jest of it all."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried Ellis suddenly. "Look. There is the mouth of the river not fifty feet to the left."

He gave a glance behind him as he spoke.

"The enemy are easily five hundred yards behind us," he added with a smile.

As the canoe drove into the stiller waters of the river it simply seemed to fly under the powerful strokes of the paddle-men.

Ellis stood up and took his bearings. He made a splendid picture as he balanced himself in the flying canoe.

"We can go 100 feet to their ten in this still water, while they are struggling with the seas outside," Ellis said. "By the time they get within the mouth of the river, we ought to have nearly a mile start of them."

"That is a good long start," answered Waring. "The stern chase is the long chase. But what if they stop us somewhere down the river with a flanking party?"

"Drop the if's," snapped Waring. "It's enough to get along out of this without borrowing trouble."

So the tragic race went on.

The whites, panting, weary, fleeing for dear life itself in an overloaded canoe, along the heavily wooded shores of the mighty Athabasca River.

Not far behind, a band of Crees, whites and half-breeds athirst for their blood, crazy to revenge the death of the *renegade scout*.

As they rounded a bend in the river a frightened deer, raised his head, and gazed at them in astonishment. Then he disap-

peared in the woods. A great bear snarled at them from a crag a moment later. A splendid graceful Rocky Mountain sheep tore back to shelter from its feeding place when it saw the laboring canoe. Birds in great flocks, startled, flew high in the amethyst sky.

Never had such a scene presented itself to any bird or beast on the shores of the placid river.

In spite of the hopes of the party they soon found that they were losing ground. The war cries of the savages came nearer and nearer. And with it there came, stilling much of the cries, a sound like the dull booming of the surf on a great rocky sea swept ashore.

"Hark!" shouted Ellis, "what is that noise dead ahead."

"It sounds like the ocean," put in Constable Bushwick.

"Nonsense," rejoined Ellis, "there can be no ocean here. We are thousands of miles away."

"I don't care," insisted Manning, "Bushwick is right. I hear the sounds of the ocean."

"Do you know anything about navigation down the Athabasca?" anxiously asked Ellis of Waring.

"Not a thing, except at the post it was told me that it could be navigated by a canoe, nearly to Fort Edmonton. The river runs far away from the fort proper, but some of its tributary streams reach the fort."

Ellis nodded, but still sent the canoe flying along, with the aid of Manning.

As the party proceeded onward the sullen sea like roar became more insistent. The river too began to take on a swifter pace in its current. They saw around a bend the white spray rising as if from a great upheaval of the river's bed.

"I don't understand it," said Ellis. "Oh, my God."

As he spoke he had rounded the bend which hid the cause of the rising spray, and the swiftly moving waters about him.

For there right ahead was a fearful convulsion of nature.

The Athabasca River here was cut up into a torrent of tossing, leaping, hurrying foam flecked, death giving waters, for here began a stretch of rapids, in which all felt, no canoe could live.

"Rapids!" shouted Waring. "The river is cut up here by rapids into which no canoe may venture without being destroyed."

"Run quick ashore," shouted Manning to Ellis, "we can portage the canoe by the river dangers. See there is the trail over at the left bank."

Ellis saw that Manning was right. Here they were face to face with a long stretch of rocks, over which the river dashed with the noise of a thunder storm. The navigator usually knew of the rapids, or series of falls, and when they were reached they went ashore, unpacked their cargo, and carried it by the obstruction, to the clear water below, a distance of a mile, to continue the journey easily.

Ellis followed Manning's plan. He drove the canoe to the portage trail.

"Too late," yelled Waring as Ellis started. "Too late. Look."

There right behind them, not half a mile away came the first canoe of savages, yelling, firing their weapons, well knowing that they had trapped the whites at last.

"Here is where we make our last stand," cried Bushwick.

"We never can get time to unload, pack our stores about the rapids, and then carry (portage) the canoe. Get ashore quick. Get into cover and die fighting."

"Sit still all," cried Ellis. His face was deep with purpose. He gave a long splendid stroke of his paddle, and sent the frail canoe directly out into the center of the swift current. It caught the craft quickly.

"What are you going to do?" yelled Waring.

"Going to try and shoot the rapids," cried Ellis. "Rather a death amid them than to die by the bullets of those dastardly Crees."

As Ellis spoke the terrible current caught the tiny canoe. It swept head on into the awful maelstrom. Around them in a moment was nothing but sheets of glancing foam. The roar of waters deafened them. They could not see either shore.

Twenty times the canoe seemed to be at the point of swamping under some curling green-black wave. But the splendid arm of Ellis kept the craft from sinking.

They flashed by great rocks with the speed of the hurricane. Water came aboard at times in sheets, but the party bailed desperately, and kept the little canoe afloat in some way, just how, no one really knew. Death stalked in every inch of water. Death lay with grinning faces and outstretched hand on every rock passed.

Yet calm, smiling, but intent on his work, in the center of the canoe Ellis kneeled. Now a grand stroke hurled the canoe from a rocky crag, whose point gleamed beneath a fringe of water. Then he turned suddenly to the right, as if he instinctively knew the proper channel.

Marion and Caroline clung to each other as if in the hope that if they had to die, they might not be separated in the last agony.

The men in the boat sat with white faces but with no word to disturb the work of Ellis. It was a fearful yet splendid moment. The sight of that silent, grave, figure, looking over the tremendous waste of tossing waters, yet never for one moment quailing at their menace, was one that Marion knew that she would never forget as long as she lived.

"He is a man, a great, brave fine man," she thought.

Bang!

A fearful great stretch of foam fringed green water came aboard of the tiny canoe. It slapped Marion and Caroline in the face like a human hand. It spread like a great snake over the boat.

The canoe trembled. It almost stopped. Marion shut her eyes expecting to be immediately struggling in the cruel water. She saw as if in a dream the forms of the men in the canoe bailing like mad. The canoe gave a shudder and then, oh blessed relief, the little craft righted, it became still, it sped on an even keel ahead.

Still waters surrounded it. Behind loomed the great Athabasca rapids.

Inspector Fred Ellis had accomplished the almost impossible. He had shot the terrible rapids in a birch bark canoe.

"Saved!" yelled Waring.

"Saved!" echoed all the men in the boat save Ellis.

"Not yet saved," shouted the Inspector. "We must yet fight off the Crees. They will make the portage in five minutes."

He drove the canoe ashore. With the speed of the wind he tore down bushes, rolled small trees, that made up part of the underbrush into a sort of breast-works.

"Get all the stuff out of the canoe and behind this little shelter," cried Ellis. "It's our only hope."

He feared that there really was no hope. How he expected to fight off a band of Indians twice his number, was a question that he did not even ask himself. His was now only the hope that he might be able to keep off the foe till nightfall and then get away under the cover of the darkness.

Yet he knew that it was a forlorn hope. In his own mind the doom of his party was sealed.

Quickly came the fight again.

The Crees hurried around the side of the falls fortunately having taken the bank opposite to the one where Ellis had erected the breast-works.

Yet Ellis knew that it was only a question of time when they would discover their error and would send a scouting party to attack him on his own side of the river.

"They will attack us across the river, and on this side also," Ellis told Waring.

"And with this hole in my shoulder I am not much better than a dead man," rejoined Waring.

But Ellis still fought on. He instructed his men to get as much protection as possible behind the barrier. He told them to not fire unless they were sure of killing when the final attack came, because they did not know how long they would have to hold their position and ammunition was to be used up with great care.

"Here they come," yelled Manning who was watching the enemy. He was right. On the same side of the river as were the unfortunate whites came streaming along a party of Crees.

They delivered a terrible fire as they came onward.

At the same time from the opposite bank the Indians delivered a cross fire.

"We will be shot to pieces in an hour," yelled Ellis. "Fight boys anyway, but before the last man dies, he must remember our promise to Marion and Caroline."

The fire became hotter. Manning was wounded twice, but not mortally. Casey also was hit. Not a person save the girls were unwounded.

"It's almost over," cried Ellis. "We can not hold out for fifteen minutes."

"Die like men," replied Waring who wounded as he was still managed to load and fire his weapon.

The Crees were suffering too from the fire of the whites. Several of their number had been either killed or wounded.

They saw the long range battle was devastating their numbers, and they did what Indians are not prone to do—they decided to make a charge and thus to settle the fight quickly.

"If they charge us we are gone," said Ellis through his set teeth.

Waring nodded.

"Remember your promise," whispered Marion as she crept toward Ellis.

"I will," he said. "Now boys all together. When they rush us, give them all the bullets you have. If they get in over the breast-works club them to death; use your revolvers or your Bowie knives."

With yells, the savages were sweeping down with a steady front. They knew that the last stand of the whites was being made, but counted on sheer numbers to storm the breast-works successfully.

But as the rush started, over the woods there rang the clear notes of a bugle.

Its brazen challenge soared high over the din of battle. Again, and again it rang.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESCUE.

With one great yell Fred Ellis jumped to his feet.

"Rescued!" he cried. "That's the bugle call of the Mounted Police for a charge. We are saved."

As he spoke a leaden hail darted out of the woods upon the Indians. Many a brave bit the dust at the first fire. Again swept the tempest of bullets upon the Indians. They broke and ran, while swarming from the woods came a thousand of the men of the North-West Mounted Police.

They charged the fleeing Indians. The cruel steel bit deep. The leaden messengers found many an Indian heart.

Like the breath of a breeze blowing the fog from the waters of the lake, the Indians vanished into the fastness of the forest. Hardly ten were able to escape. They bore the body of Chief Piapet, who had been killed at the first fire, and cowed, broken, ready to accept peace at any price they hurried away to the inner fastness of the mountains.

"Hurrah!" yelled Manning, "here comes Sir Frederick Elting."

That officer dashed up to the war worn party, mounted on a big bay horse. His uniform of brilliant red gleamed as he came. He was in the dress parade costume of the Mounted Police. His scarlet tunic was faced with yellow. His blue cloth breeches bore yellow stripes. His feet bore cavalry boots, and on his head was a white helmet.

Ellis greeted Sir Frederick with joy.

"Is my niece safe?" he shouted. In a moment Marion had rushed to her uncle's arms.

Briefly Ellis told of the great perils through which he and his men had passed.

"If I have influence at Ottawa," snapped Sir Frederick when he heard the tale of the splendid battle against the Crees by Ellis and his men in the past few days, "and I think I have, you gain an Assistant Commissionership of the Mounted Police for this. And Waring takes your place as Inspector, and every man in this party advances a grade. You have put down a most dangerous Rebellion alone, and you must be rewarded."

Sir Frederick then told Ellis that the Rebellion had grown to such strength that he had been instructed by the Canadian government to take a large force of Mounted Police and quell the disturbance.

"We found that it was easy to quell the general disturbance, but we could not find Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout, and Chief Piapet, the Cree Indian, who were the brains of the entire campaign. I see now from your story why we could not find those arch-conspirators," explained Sir Frederick.

"How did you learn our plight?" asked Ellis.

"An Indian runner, came to our camp early this morning,"

replied Sir Frederick. "We were told that a party of whites were sore beset at the Athabasca rapids. I judged that the party was yours, as I had heard from your post that you had started with an escort for my niece and her companion for Fort Edmonton, just as the Rebellion broke out."

"You came just at the right time," simply answered Ellis. "We could not have held out long."

"Did you see the Indian runner?" asked Marion.

"No," replied Sir Frederick. "It was not my good fortune to see the runner. I was seated in headquarters at Fort Edmonton about ten o'clock one night. In fact it was just the night before we started on our campaign. I was told that an Indian runner had left a written message for me. I opened it. It told me that you and my niece were still alive but that you were hemmed in somewhere about Athabasca Lake. It said that you could hardly hope to escape if aid was not sent you."

"Yes, oh, go on," said Marion.

"Well, I could not proceed at once to your rescue," continued Sir Frederick. "We had to subdue some of the other branches of the Rebellion before coming to your aid. I figured that a man like Ellis, with Waring, and the other men he had with him, would not give in easily. So I hurried to quell the outlying parts of the uprising, meaning to hurry to your aid just as quickly as possible."

"Where were you when the Indian boy made a second visit to your camp?" questioned Ellis.

"We had proceeded to within probably three miles of this point," Sir Frederick added, "when we went into camp as I have said. This morning as early as daybreak the same Indian boy came to our camp and said that he came from you, and that unless we hurried, you and all your party would be killed. I at once ordered out my command and we came here to find you at the last gasp."

"You came only just in time," answered Ellis again.

"But Mr. Ellis, don't you see," hurriedly put in Marion. "Don't you see that the Indian boy was no boy?"

"No boy?" replied Ellis. "I do not understand."

"Oh you stupid men," replied Marion. "Do you not see that the boy was no boy. It was 'The Dawn.'"

Ellis stared.

"By Jove I guess you are right," he replied after a pause. "God Bless her. I owe my life; we owe our lives to her, yet I took the life of her husband. This world is filled with contradictions."

"It was a sad fate that made you the instrument to remove her husband," rejoined Marion. "But after all, he was the breaker of the laws of our great land. He knew he took his life in his hands when he rose in Rebellion, and you know that you have taken an oath to protect the British flag from just such miscreants as Jules de Cruces, the renegade scout."

"I know all this," bravely answered Ellis, "but I still wish fate had taken some other instrument to work out its dread purposes."

The battle was now over.

Not a trace of an Indian, white, or half-breed, could be seen anywhere. The rescuers had threshed the woods for miles and now with cheers of victory they began hurrying back to the little party of war-worn people.

"Hurrah for Fred Ellis," one party yelled as they picked him up and carried him toward Sir Frederick's headquarters.

"Hurrah, for Clifford Waring," yelled another party catching up Waring as they yelled and hurrying after Ellis.

Others carried every man in the war beaten squad of brave men.

Four deep the bronzed veterans surged about Marion and Caroline as a sort of guard of honor.

Then some one full throated, clear, in splendid baritone began the song of the North-West Mounted Police. Another voice

joined in. Others flowed into the martial chorus. Soon a thousand and more voices joined in.

And thus they sang:

"We drown in unknown waters,
We burn in forest flame.
We freeze on Northern barriers;
Some meet a self-sought shame.
Fever, frost and hunger,
Thirst 'neath a cloudless sky;
Bullet, spear and knife thrust—
Thus do your wastrels die.
What should they know of our troubles,
Our hopes, or fears, or care,
Who sit in the ingle corner,
Where the glowing embers flare?
Truly they dream of Empire
In their listless Island way,
But little they reck the Empire's cost,
Their vagrant son's must pay."

And so, surrounded by their friends, honored, loved, with fame's deathless laurels for each devoted head, the little party hurried to the tent of Sir Frederick Elting, happy, wounded, war worn and yet after all, the true type of the hardy sons and daughters of great Britain, who are keeping her Empire in all this great world.

* * * * *

Three months later Fort Edmonton was ablaze with lights. Happiness reigned everywhere.

The old war worn walls of the fort were decorated with many flowers and clinging vines. A band played in the outer street. A merry company was laughing and talking.

In the center of the group stood Assistant Commissioner Frederick Ellis, of the North-West Mounted Police. Beside him stood his beautiful bride, whom he had just married. Do you need to be told that the bride was Marion Elting?

And right there stood another equally happy pair.

Goodness! Why of course it was Inspector Clifford Waring and his bonnie bride, very well known in these pages, as sweet Caroline Bennington.

"Hurrah for the groom and the brides" called the strong old voice of Sir Frederick Elting. "May they live for ever as happy as we all are tonight."

The guests roared a splendid second to the wishes.

There came a knock on the great door of the Fort. A soldier guard opened it. There, mounted on a strong dappled gray Indian pony, was a young Indian lad.

"Give this to Mrs. Frederick Ellis," the lad said.

A moment later a great, beautiful robe lay in the marriage room, for the guests to admire. It was a very valuable specimen of the pelt of the Rocky Mountain grizzly bear, beautifully tanned, and prepared with true Cree Indian skill.

"What a magnificent gift," Mrs. Ellis cried. "Look, here is a note."

"Read it," requested Sir Frederick.

This is what the note said:—

"May your unhappiest day in the future, be as happy as your happiest day in the past."

"The letter is signed 'The Dawn,'" said Mrs. Ellis. "God bless her. If it had not been for her, we would not have been here tonight."

Standing at the head of the table Sir Frederick silently drank a toast to the brave Indian girl.

The guests silently followed his example.

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